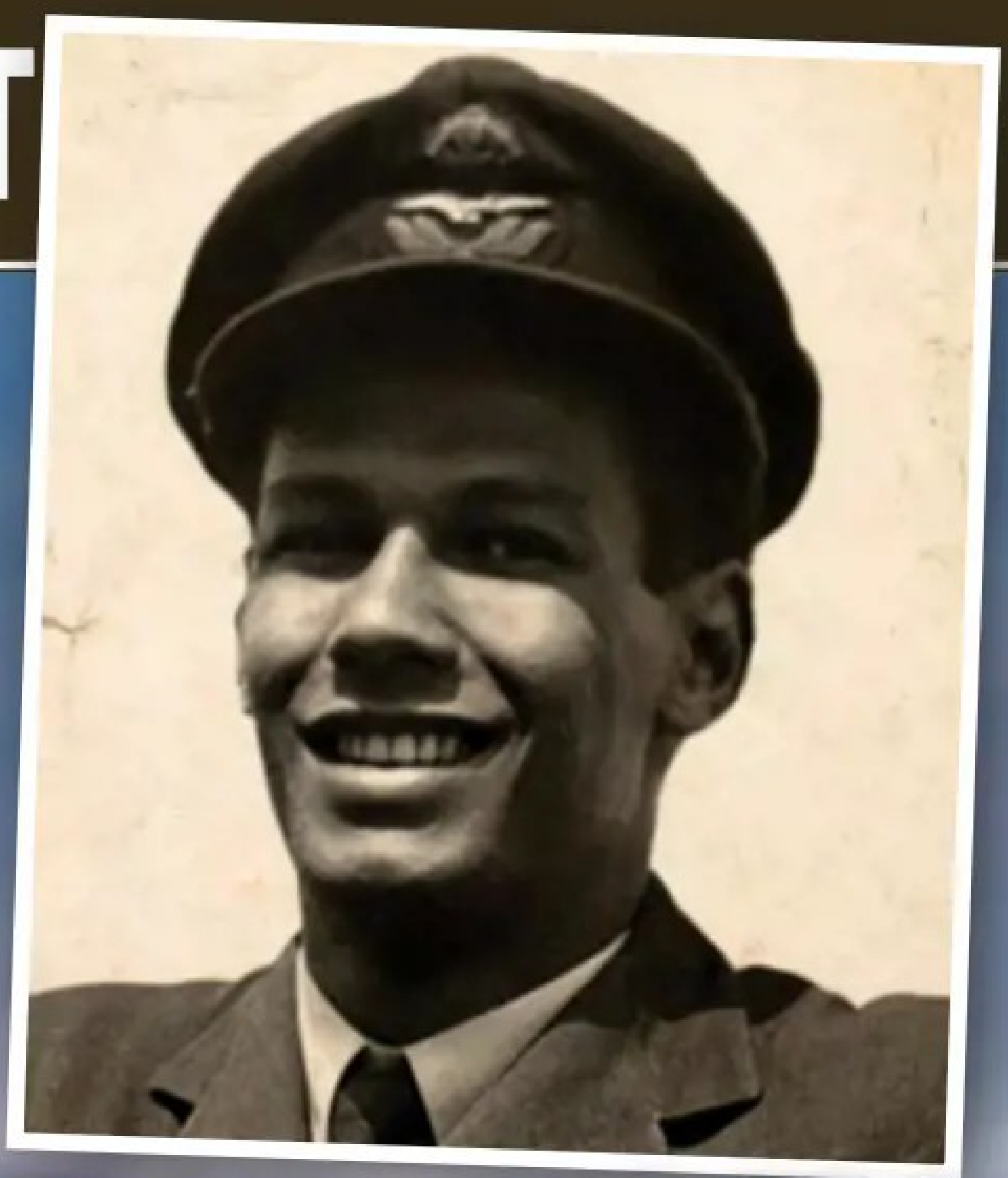
HEAVY-LIFT HEROES: THE RAF'S CHINOOK FLEET

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING MILITARY MONTHLY

BRITAIN AT WAR

ISSUE
214



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HOW TV'S CY GRANT CAME OF AGE IN STALAG LUFT III

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Rome-Bell-Wire

Reichswald RAIDERS

Flying 'cab ranks' with cluster-bombing Canadians

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The lost POWs of P&O

Why HMS *India*'s crew spent WWI behind Norse fences

Ginger Lacey's last kill

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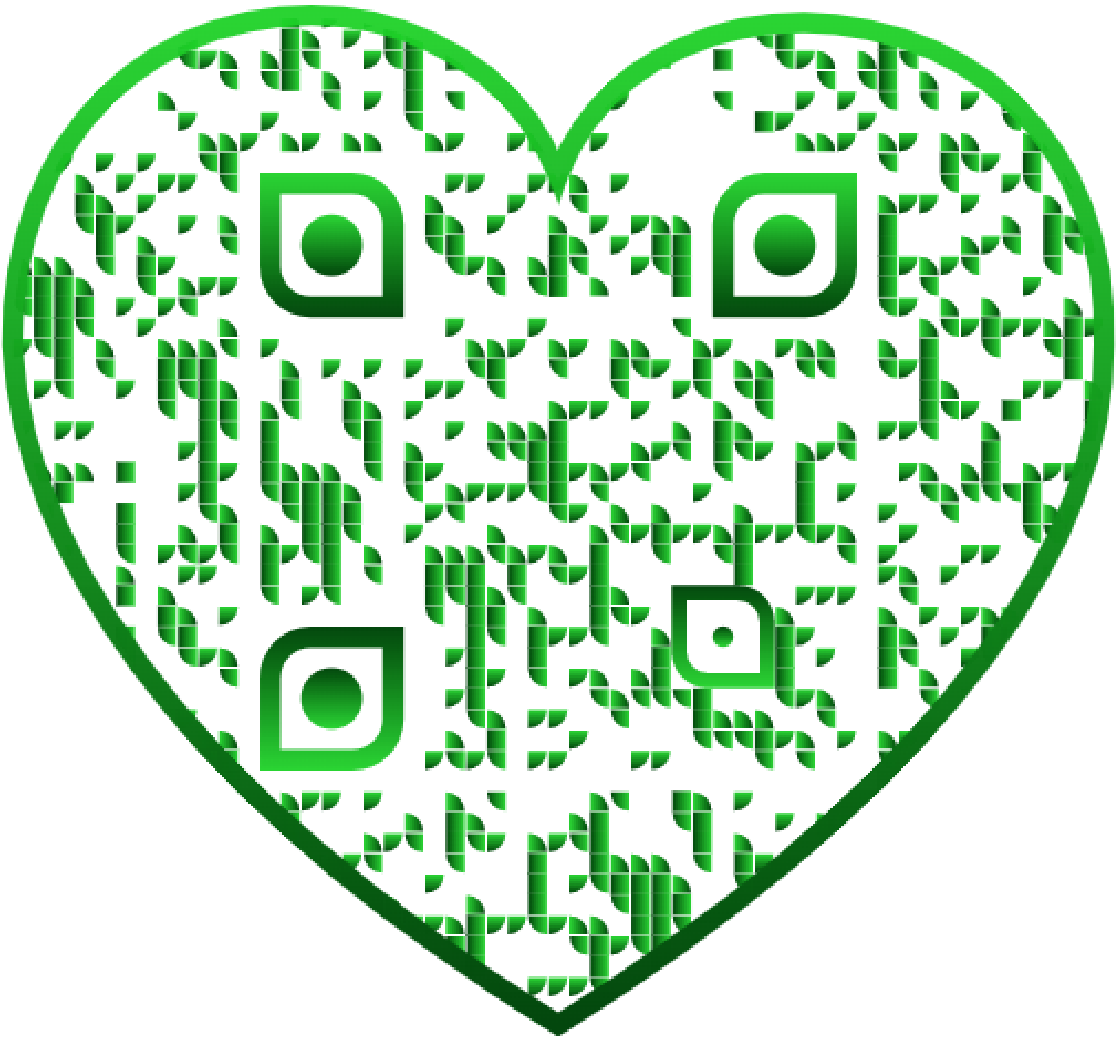

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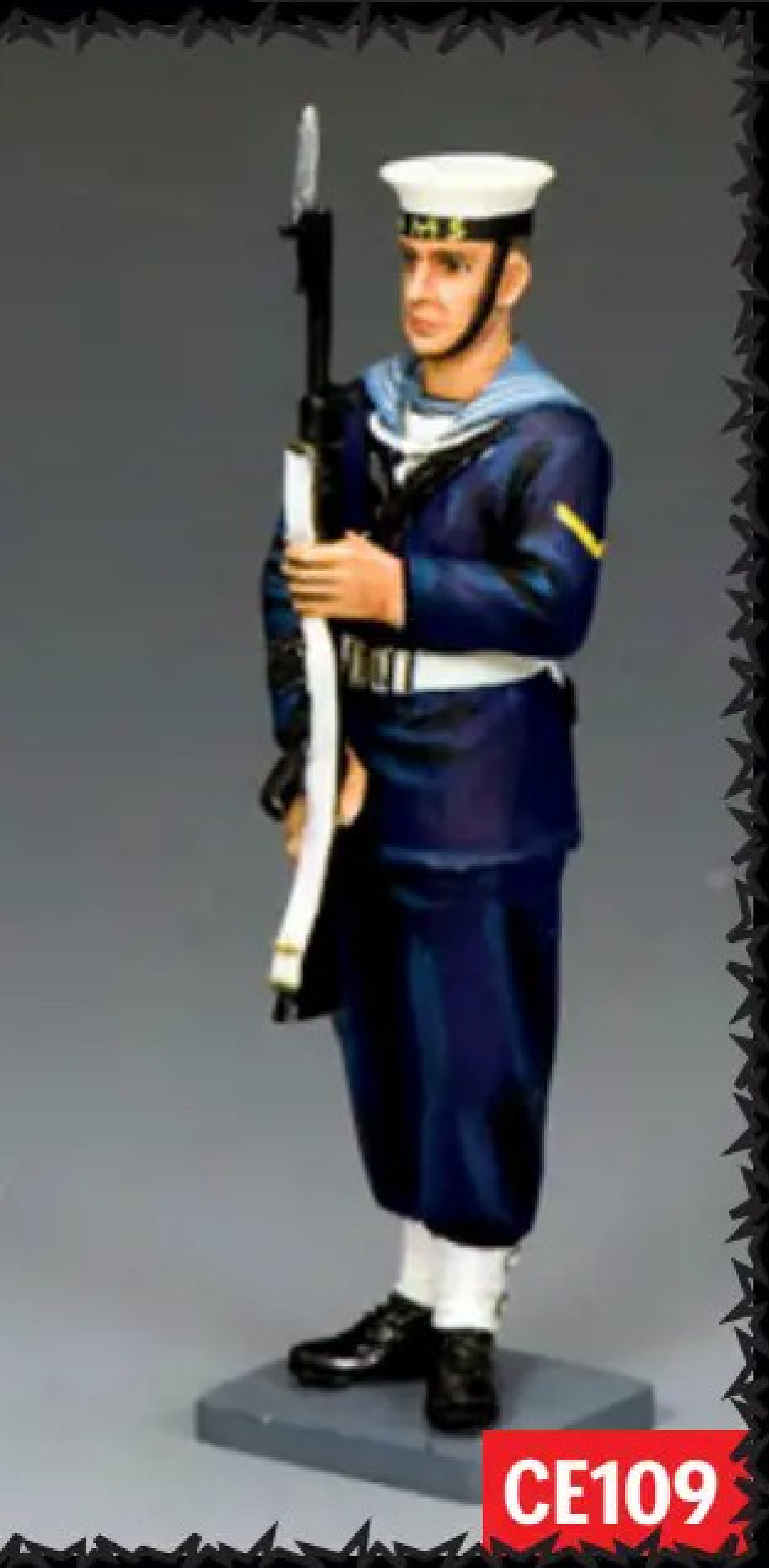
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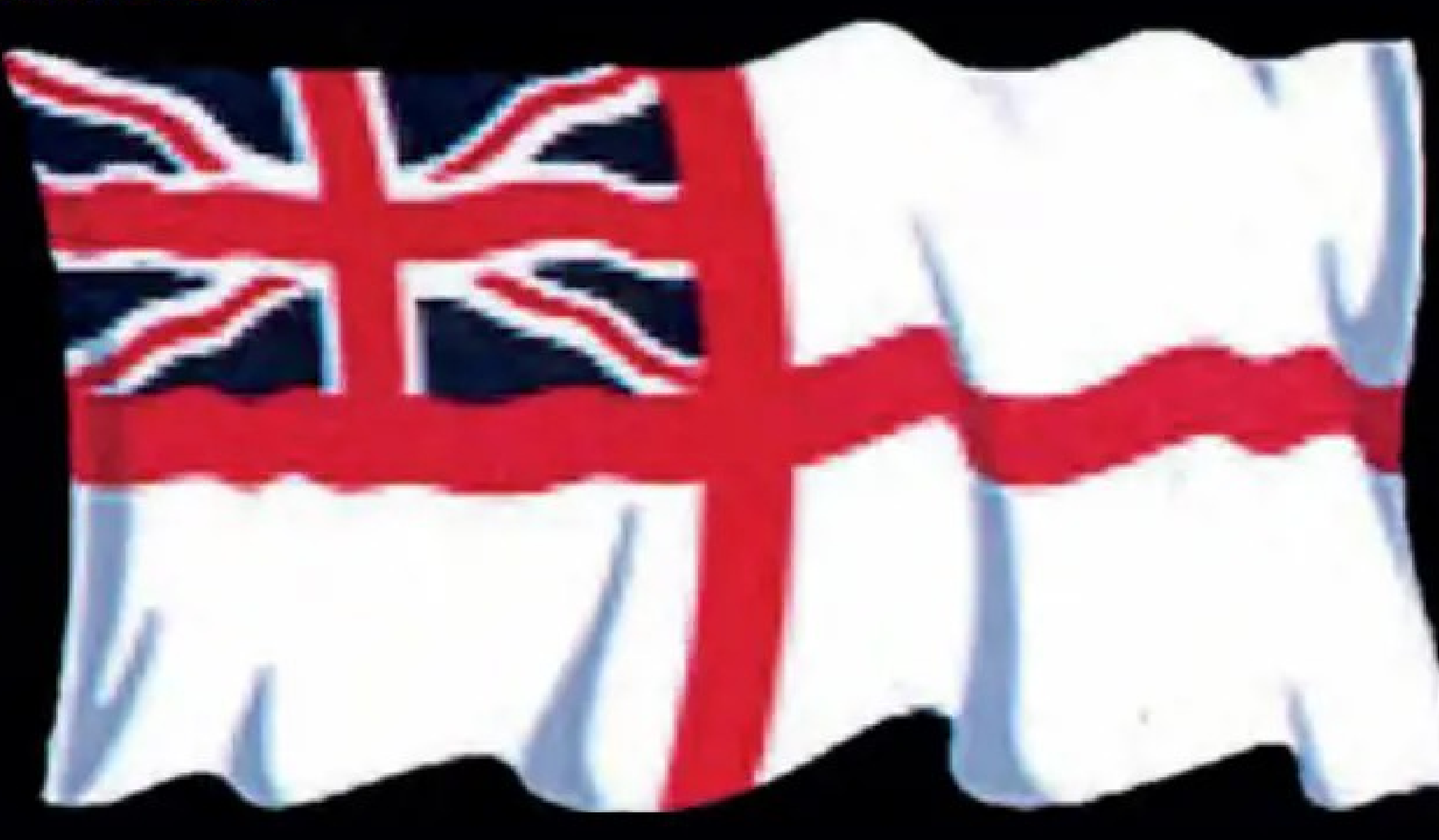

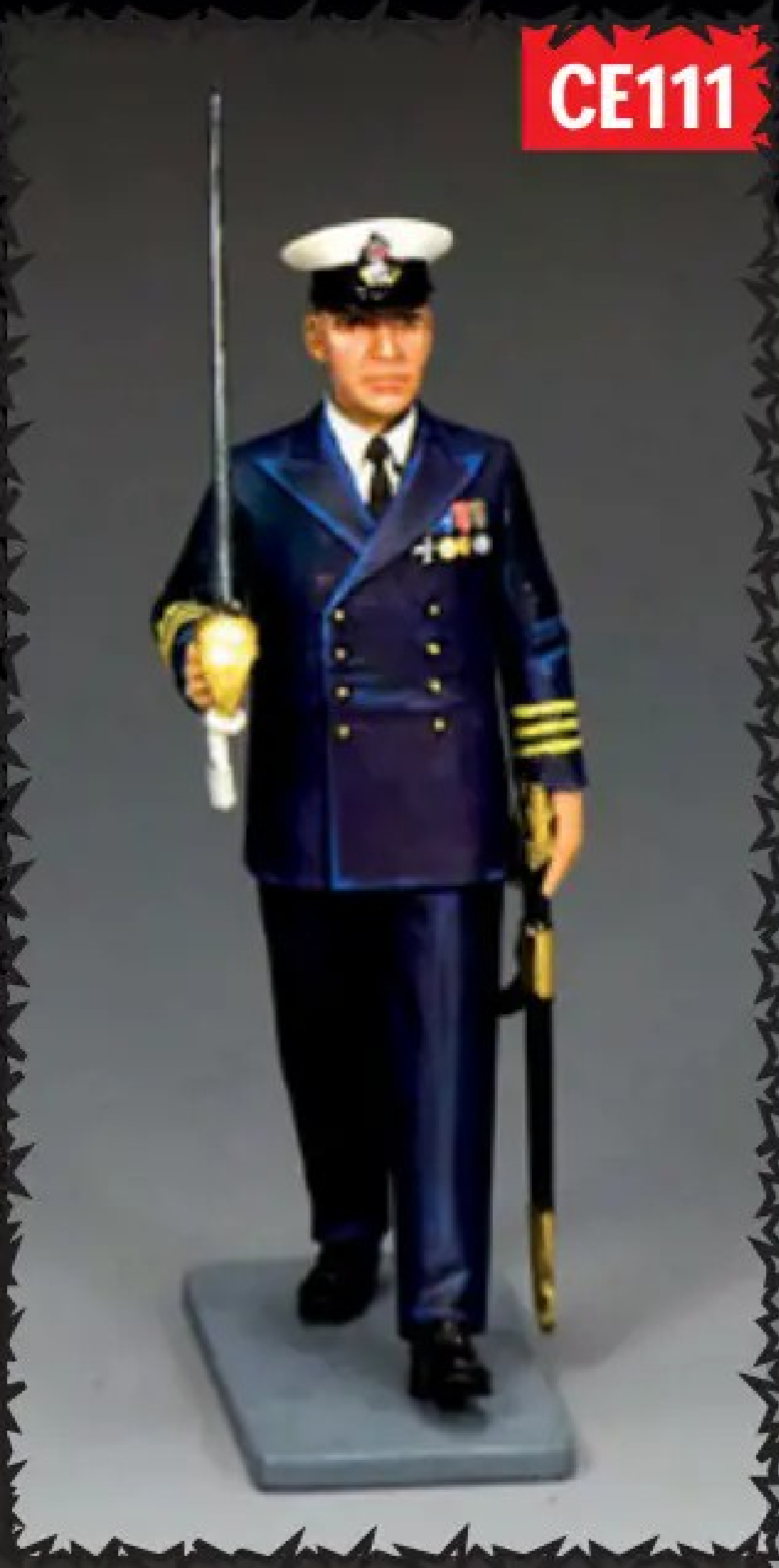
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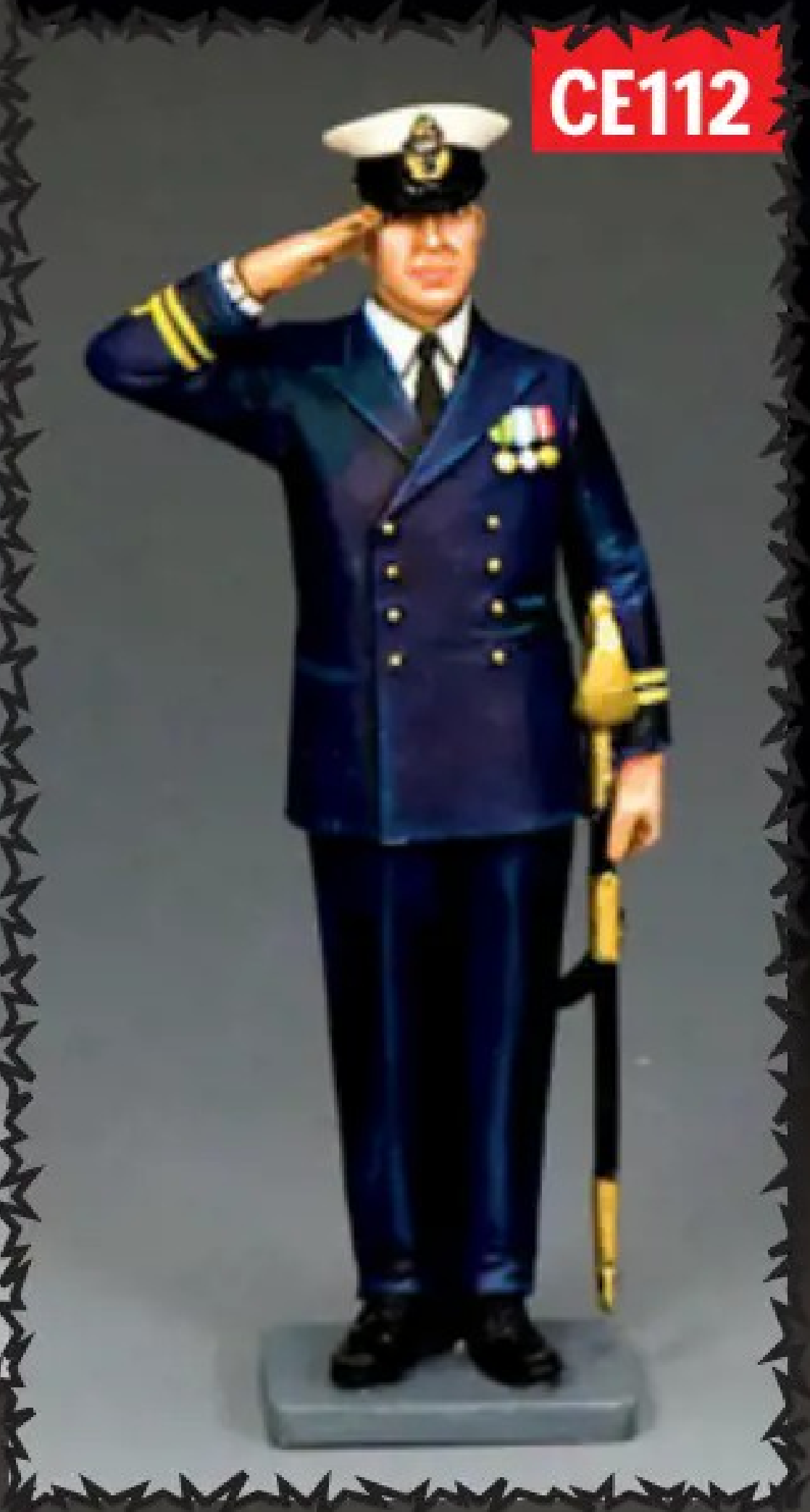
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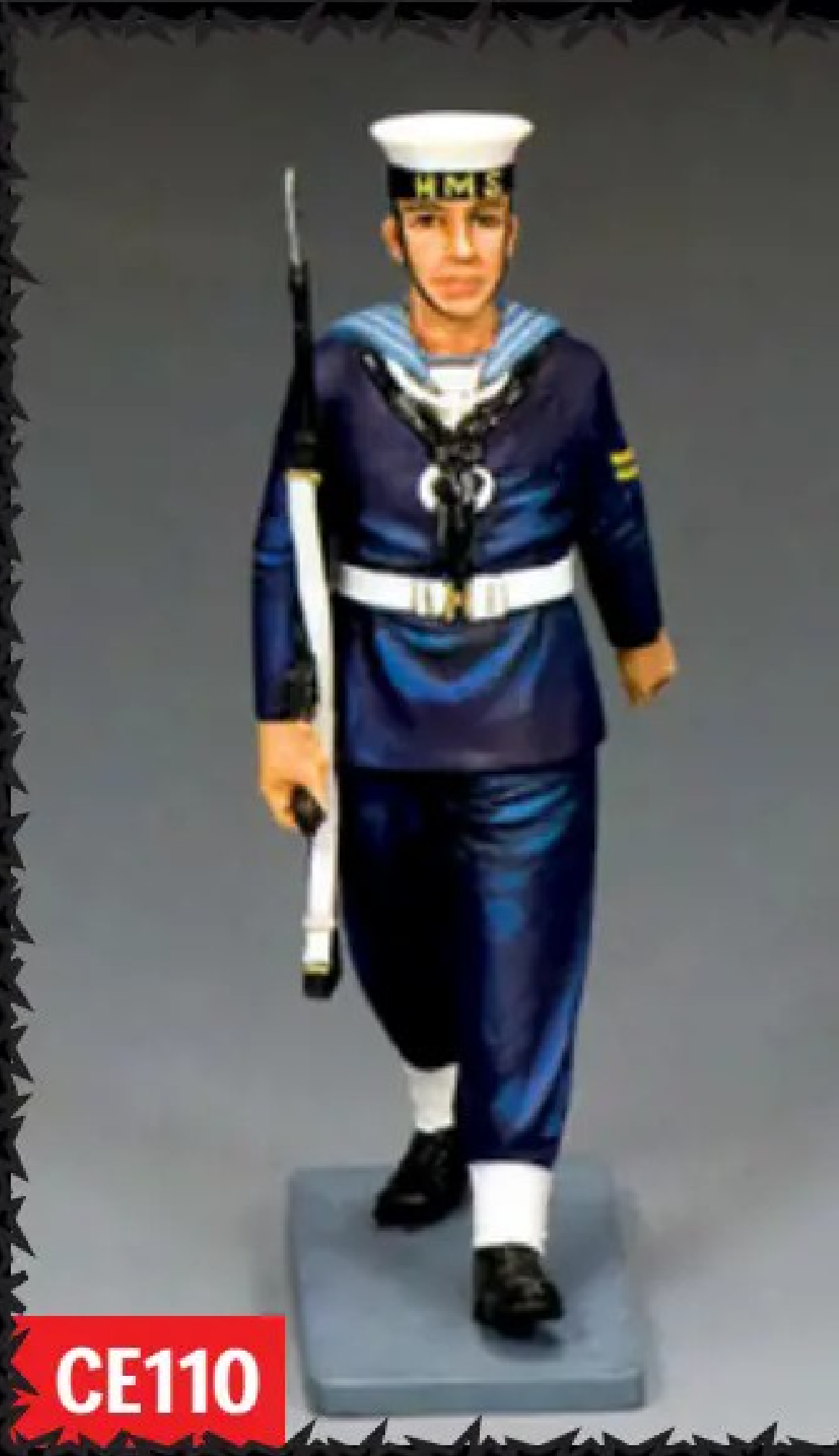
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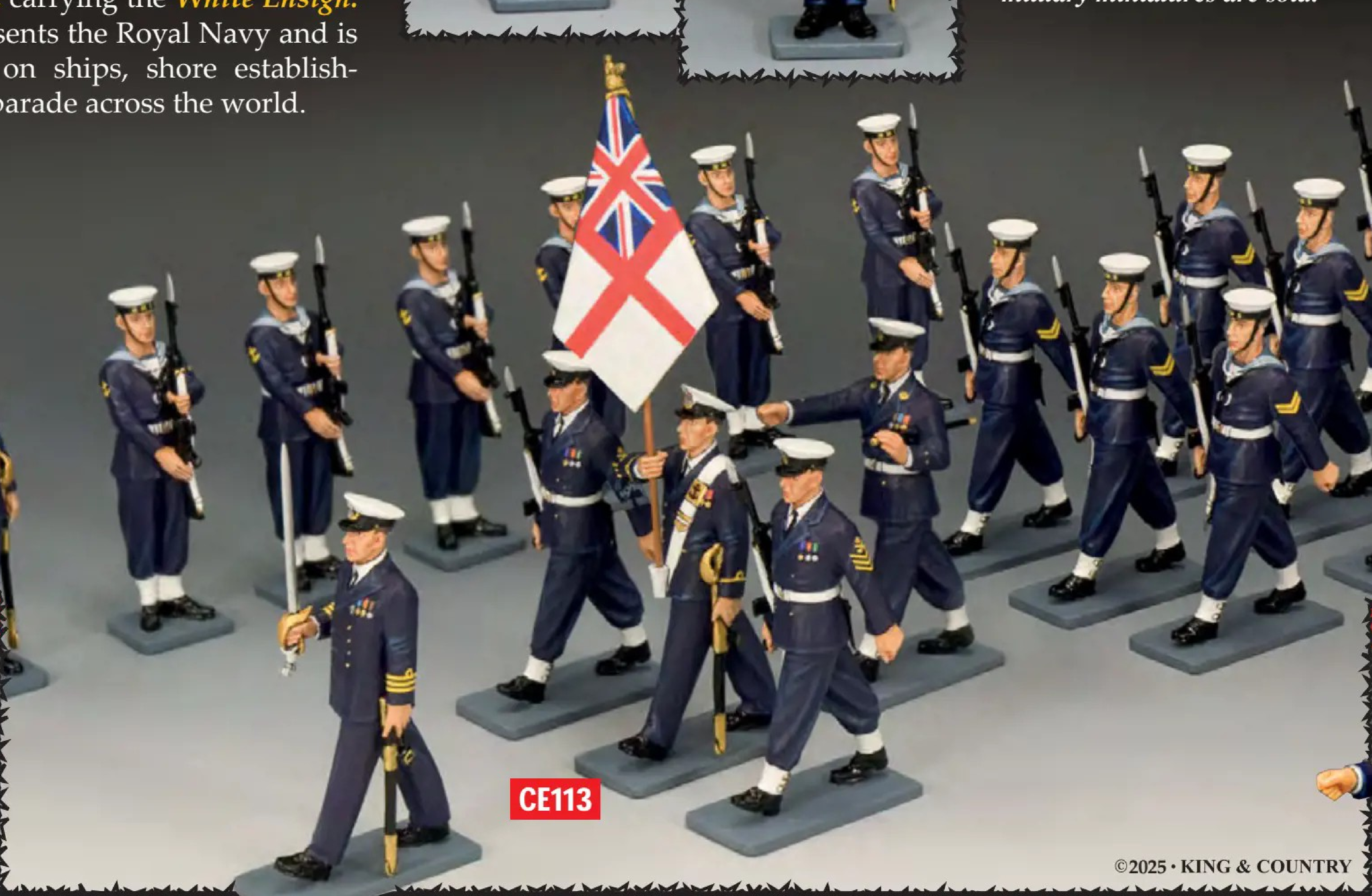
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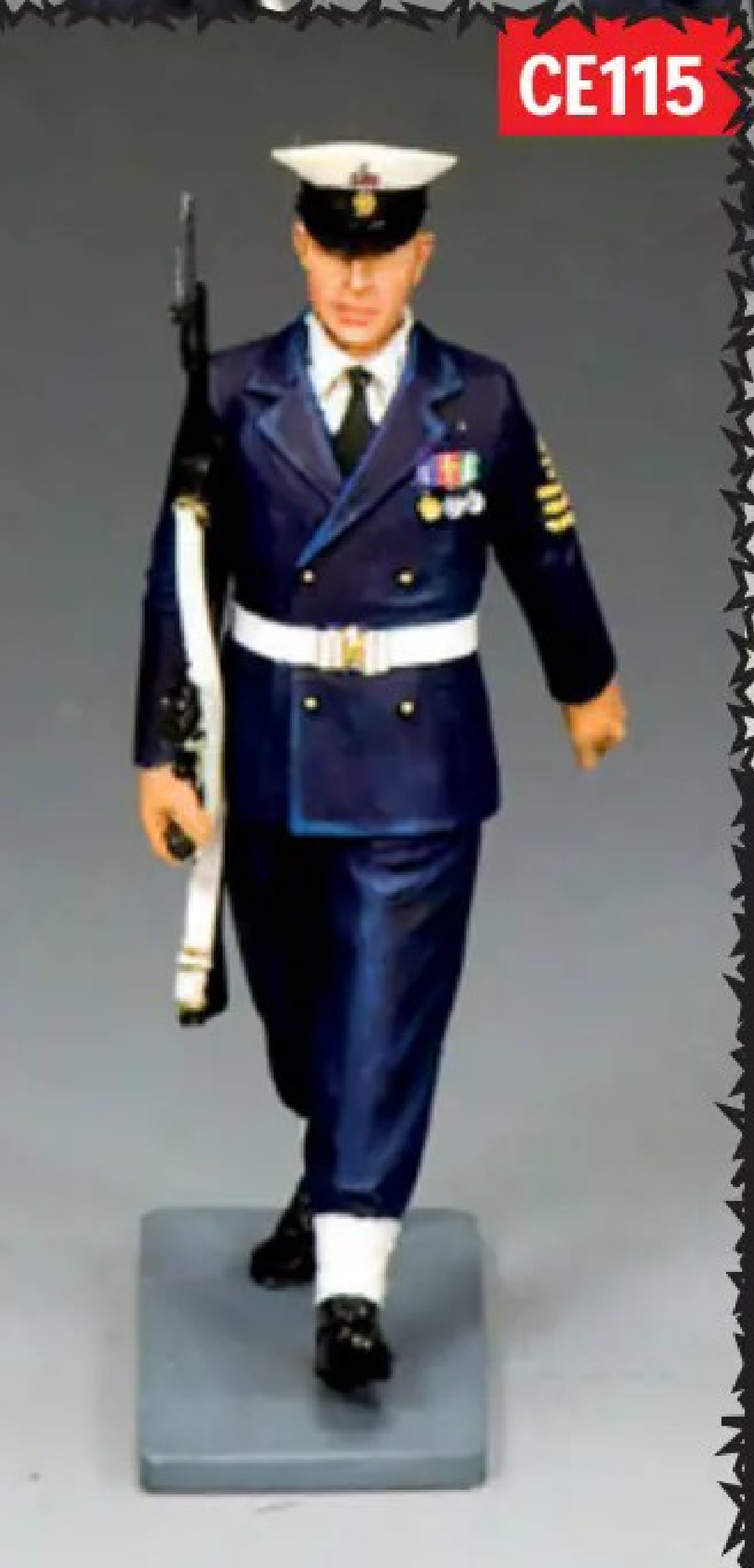
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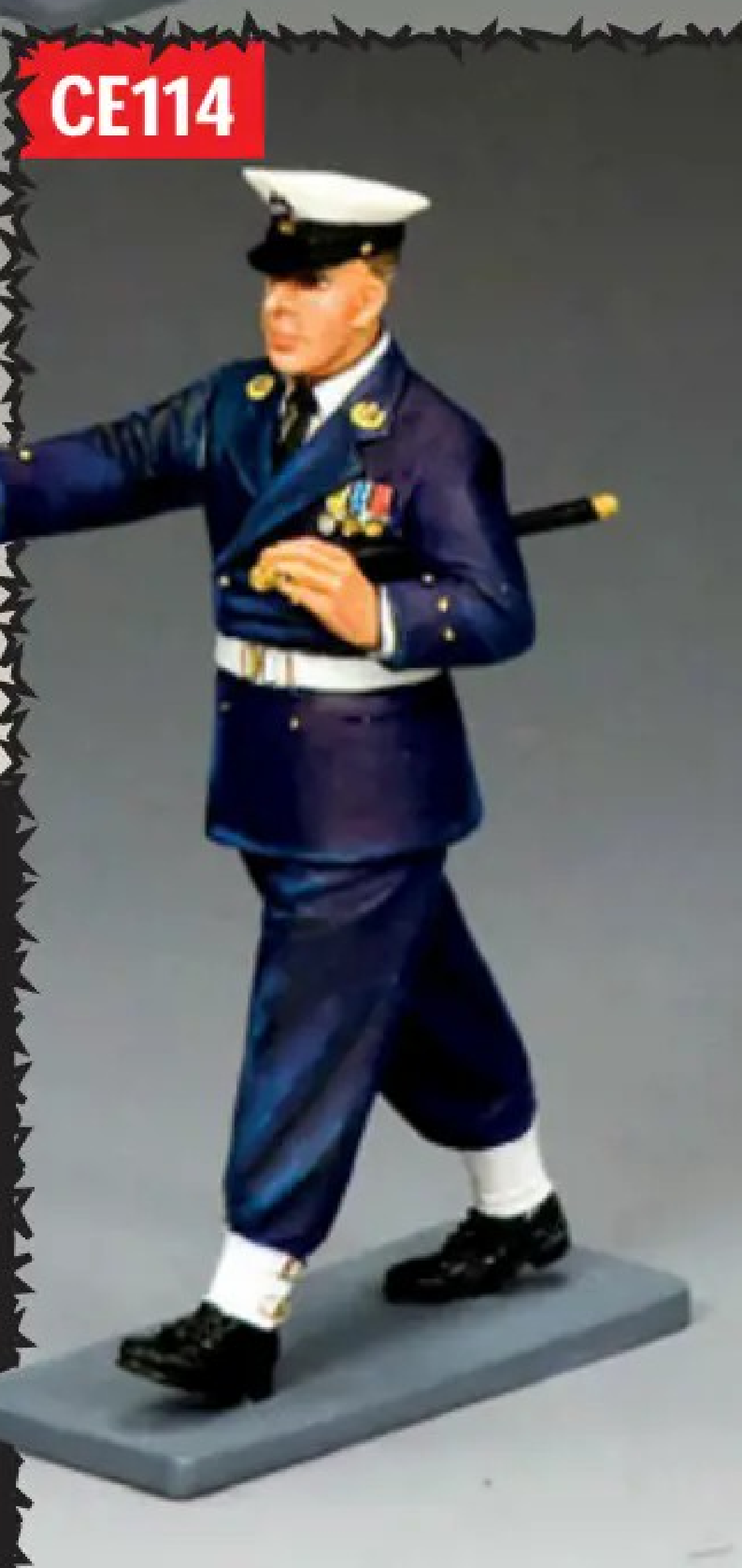
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From the Editor

No.438 Squadron began the war flying biplanes and converted to Kittyhawks and Hurricanes (shown) before, from January 1944, operating Typhoons. It still flies today as a helicopter squadron. SQUADRON ARCHIVES/RCAF

I wanted to begin with this issue's cover story, which concerns the fighter-bombers of 438 Squadron RCAF. These pilots helped maintain 'cab ranks' of bombed-up Typhoons waiting to support Monty's 21st Army Group as it pushed through the Reichswald, 80 years ago.

Their mission extended beyond the direct support of ground units, with attacks on railways helping to ease the bitter advance to the Rhine. Moreover, the crossing would have been more difficult without the use of Antwerp, the vital port critical to Allied supply lines. This necessitated the squadron destroy V1 sites. It was a busy time for 438 Squadron, and representative of the missions flown by, and dangers faced, by pilots in the support of their brothers on the ground.

Rebecca Clarke shares the story of her grandfather-by-marriage Richard Clarke – known by his middle name, Arnold – who served on SS *India*. The armed merchant cruiser was lost in August 1915, with the survivors taken to neutral Norway. Arnold sent home letters while interned there, furnishing Rebecca with insights into his and his shipmates' experiences.

His name will be familiar to those of a certain age, but to many perhaps the story of Cy Grant is something of an unknown quantity. However, Greg Quinn OBE – former High Commissioner to Guyana – is keen to tell Cy's story. Cy was a British-Guinian best known for his music, appearances on the BBC current affairs programme *Tonight*, and for the voice of Lieutenant Green in *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*. However, this showbusiness star and barrister was also a prolific activist. As a young man, he arrived in Britain seeking adventure and joined the RAF, but was soon shot down. Greg unpicks Cy's POW experiences and finds out how this man 'came of age' behind the wire at Stalag Luft III.

Gerry van Tonder delves into disaster in South Africa, where British troops came off worse in a clash with tribal warriors – and I don't mean Isandlwana. More than 30 years before that massacre, a British wagon train came under attack, a forgotten disaster in a forgotten series of wars ravaging what is now the Eastern Cape.

Tim Ripley profiles the Chinook, an iconic helicopter developed in the US, but also used by the RAF. Tim follows the Chinook's route to British service, examines the game-changing capabilities it offers and considers its future. Meanwhile, I've broken down the role of the Merchant Navy during World War Two, pulling out those awesome statistics that, I think, bring home the horrors these civilian volunteers faced, and their huge impact on the progress of the conflict.

Enjoy!

John Ash, Editor

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CONTENTS

22

52

64

8

FEATURES

22
BATTLING THE WEATHER
As Allied troops advanced through the Reichswald, Typhoons of 438 Squadron RCAF battled against the elements in their support, as Andrew Thomas explains

32
THE ROYAL NAVY'S FORGOTTEN PRISONERS
Held in surreal circumstances, it would be years before HMS *India*'s surviving crew, including Rebecca Clarke's grandfather, could go home

42
BRAVERY UNDER THE RED DUSTER
John Ash unpicks the numbers behind the war-winning contribution of Britain's 'fourth service' during World War Two – the Merchant Navy

52
CHARISMATIC CAPTIVE
Former British High Commissioner to Guyana, Greg Quinn OBE, discovers how the POW experiences of the late Cy Grant motivated the influential Guyanese entertainer

60
LACEY'S LAST
Legendary Battle of Britain fighter ace 'Ginger' Lacey achieved his last victory while serving in Burma, 80 years ago this month, writes Tom Spencer

64
ROAD TO DISASTER
Gerry van Tonder examines the Burnshill Wagon Disaster, a forgotten defeat inflicted on the British Army during a little-known conflict known as the 'War of the Axe'

80
HEAVY LIFT, HEAVY IMPACT
The Chinook has served the RAF faithfully for more than 40 years, and as Tim Ripley discovers, the mighty 'Wokka Wokka' could keep flying for many years to come

BRIEFINGS

6
MILITARY SITES GRANTED PROTECTION
Two unique military facilities near Gosport and Aldershot have been added to the National Heritage List for England in 2024

8
VETERAN BOMBER COMMAND AIRMAN GETS BEM
Former RAF airman Flight Lieutenant Colin Bell DFC has received the British Empire Medal in the 2025 New Year's Honours List

11
FALKLANDS DEATHS ANNOUNCED
Three significant figures involved in the 1982 Falklands Conflict have died

12
TRIUMPHANT AT THE END
Britain's last Trafalgar-class hunter-killer submarine has competed its final voyage before decomissioning

94

HERO OF THE MONTH

Lord Ashcroft profiles Sergeant Henry Edward Kenny VC, decorated for a feat of extraordinary bravery on the first day of the Battle of Loos in September 1915

22

COVER STORY

In early 1945, Canadian Typhoons battled the weather to support the Allied advance through the Reichswald, as well as hitting German railways and V1 sites. Andrew Thomas charts the feats of 438 Squadron RCAF during Operation Veritable

HEAVY-LIFT HEROES: THE RAF'S CHINOOK FLEET
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Why HMS India's crew spent WWI behind Norse fences
Ginger Lacey's last kill
Iconic RAF fighter ace's sole Japanese victory

Main image: Antonis Karidis
Design: Steve Diggle

REGULARS

16

DESPATCHES

Your auction update on medals, arms and armour, militaria and historic curious

18

DEBRIEF

A historian answers six common questions on Lend-Lease

20

FIELDPOST

Readers' letters, views and feedback

46

COLLECTIONS

Touring IWM Churchill War Rooms

50

IMAGE OF WAR

Meteor NF.11 'misadventure'

75

AT EASE

The latest products of interest, including our review of the Netflix film 'Six Triple Eight'

89

MILITARIA

Austin J Ruddy's round-up of collectables linked to 'Blitz Spirit'

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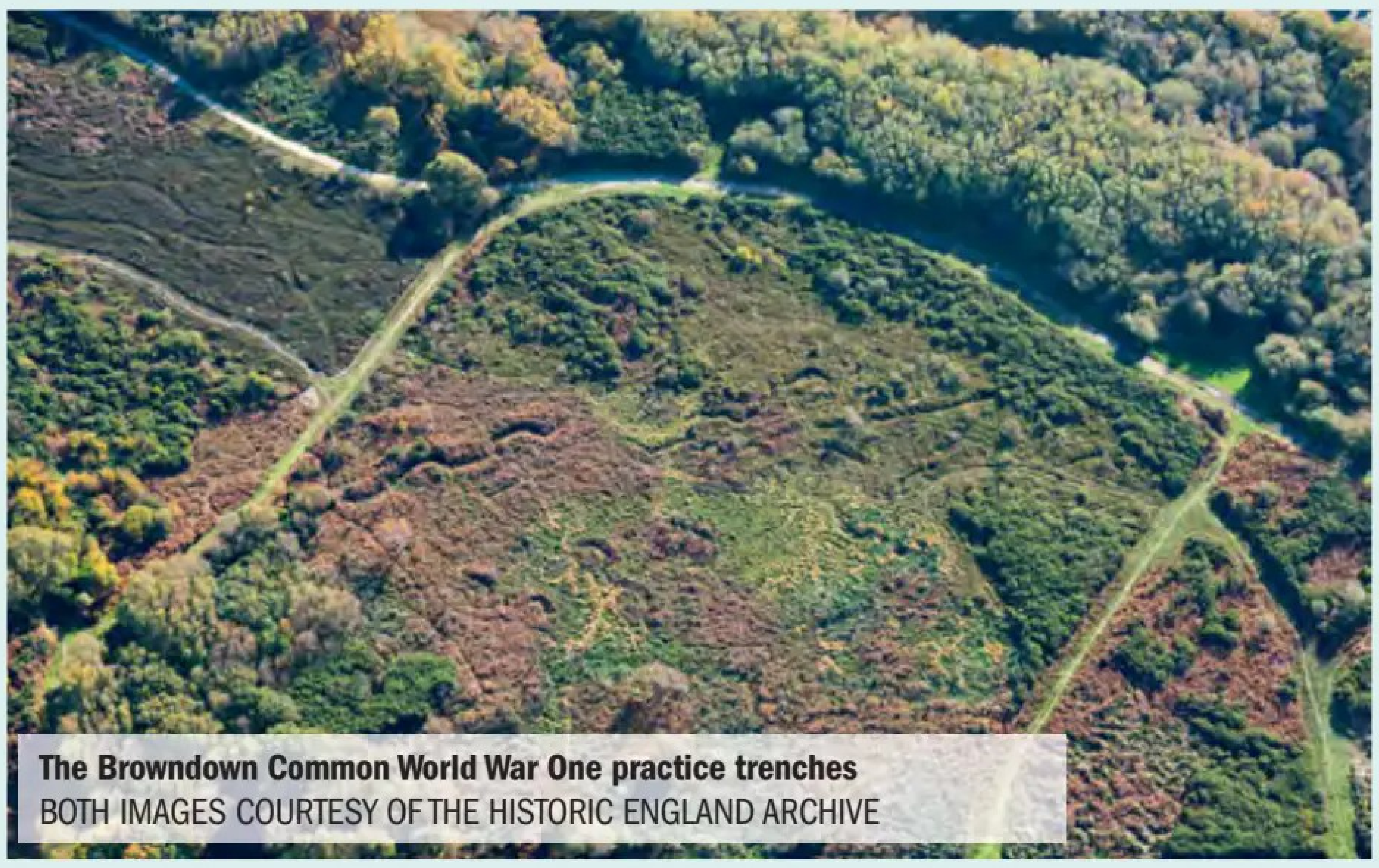
Military sites granted protection

Two unique historic facilities at Gosport and Aldershot were among 256 locations added to the National Heritage List for England in 2024. A network of World War One practice trenches, a World War Two heavy anti-aircraft battery and a series of wartime ranges on Browndown Common, Gosport, have been included as part of an extensive site that also includes a 4,000-year-old round barrow that was first recorded in the 1930s. The entire area is now protected as a scheduled monument.

Browndown has a connection with the British military dating back to at least 1782, and featured accommodation and ranges for the Royal Marines from 1877. Construction on the well-preserved trenches began in August 1914, and the network is described as being "one of England's best preserved and most complex examples of their type" after it was rediscovered in 2011. It was later surveyed and mapped by Historic England investigators.

The practice trenches were built to teach recruits and soldiers how to construct and maintain similar defences, as well as how to adapt to life in the system and fight from them. They closely mimicked sections of the Western Front and included 'opposing' frontline and support trenches across a simulated no-man's land. Among the troops believed to have trained at the site are members of the Royal Marines Light Infantry, several battalions of the Hampshire Regiment and the Volunteer Training Corps.

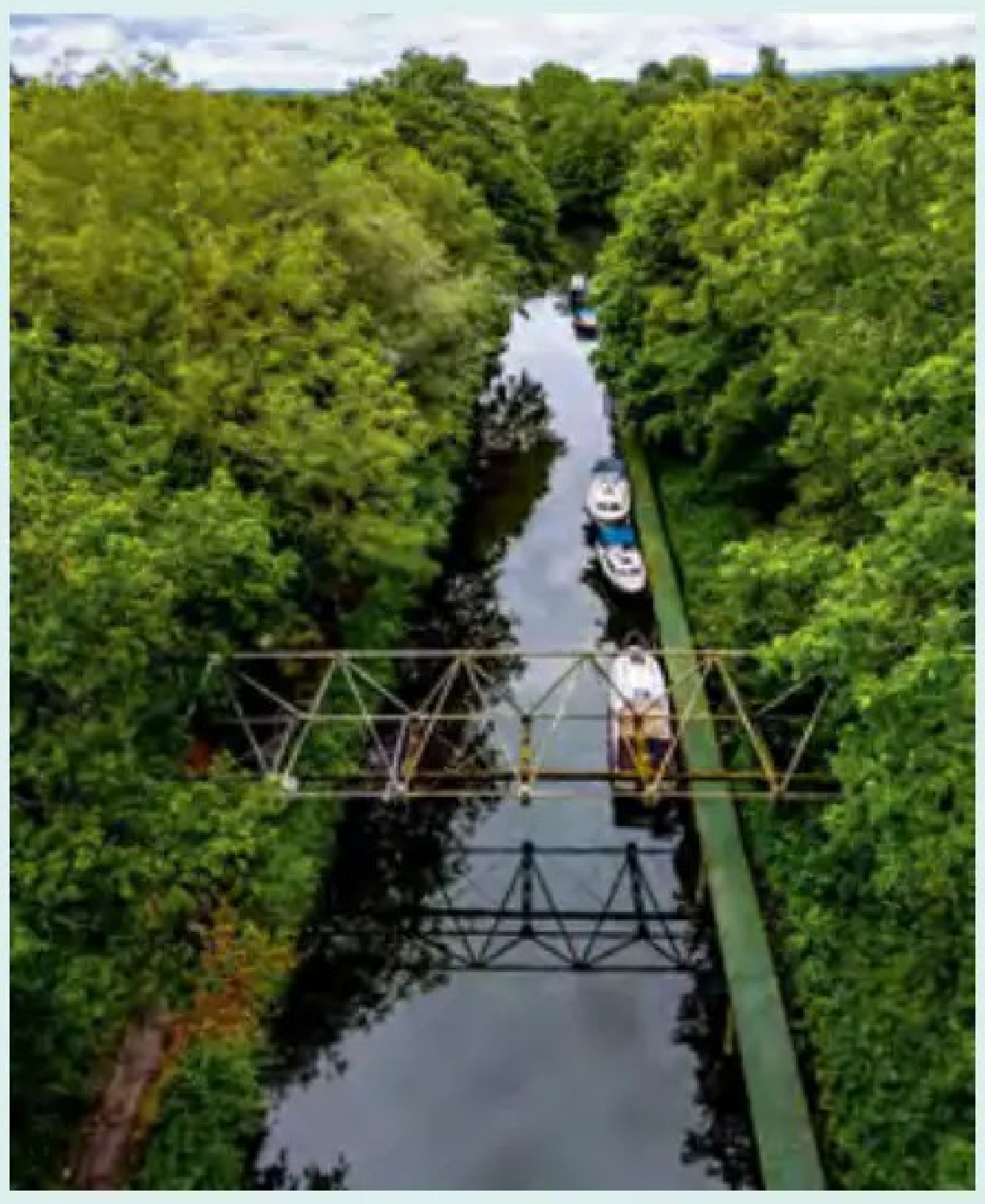
During World War Two, the an anti-aircraft battery was deployed at the site, one of 1,000 gun sites constructed early in the war. The Browndown battery was finished in June 1942 and comprised four QF 3.7in AA guns, the British military's primary heavy anti-aircraft gun between 1937-57 and roughly equivalent to the German Flak 8.8cm series. A grenade range was also constructed at the site, which is believed to have remained in use until 1966.


The Browndown Common World War One practice trenches
BOTH IMAGES COURTESY OF THE HISTORIC ENGLAND ARCHIVE

The second site, featuring a Inglis Portable Military Bridge (Light Type) Mk.I, can be found along the Basingstoke Canal near Aldershot. Known as the Inglis Pyramid Bridge, the rare structure is believed to have been built in 1916. It has been granted protection as a Grade II listed monument as it is probably the only example in use as a bridge in England. It was used on the Western Front and later repatriated to England where, from at least 1944, it was installed as a crossing over the canal to link barrack areas. In the same location, on the canal's north bank, is a World War Two pillbox that was restored in 2016.

Significant as one of just ten known examples, the bridge is the first portable and reusable design developed by Royal Engineer officer Charles Inglis, who worked for the War Office, heading up its bridge design and supply. It was designed to be lightweight and modular for rapid construction under combat conditions. The bridge was easily transportable and did not require engineers to build it, comprising 8ft construction members and custom-made fittings. The bridge would be assembled prior to use, and moved into action by just 12 men using a turntable and counterweight to deploy an 108ft span in 15 minutes. Though designed as a footbridge, two spans could be erected adjacent to each other to facilitate the movement of light vehicles. Inglis, a future professor of engineering at Cambridge, retired in 1918 as a Major, and was awarded the OBE for his innovation, which was the precursor to the Bailey bridge. He was later knighted.

A surviving Mk.II Inglis bridge, designed for crossing larger gaps and supporting heavier weights, has already received Grade II listed status and can be found at Monmouth in Wales.


Aldershot's World War One portable Inglis bridge, a rare survivor spanning the Basingstoke Canal

Great Escape medals return to base

The medals awarded to a Great Escapee have been brought home to his former squadron. Flight Lieutenant James Long, usually known as 'Les' or by his nickname 'Cookie', was born in 1915 and was an apprentice at an insurer before joining the RAF in 1939 and serving with IX(B) Squadron. He was captured on March 27, 1941, during a raid on Cologne, when his Wellington Mk.Ic, serial R1335, was attacked and crash-landed near Oudheusden in the Netherlands. The aircraft was claimed both by a German anti-aircraft battery and a night-fighter pilot.

Long was a prolific escaper, which led to him being sent to the Stalag Luft III POW camp in Sagan, now Żagań. In March 1944, he was one of the 76 personnel to break from the camp in the so-called Great Escape. He was the 46th through the tunnel but, three days later, he was arrested by the Volkssturm in Breslau and taken to Gorlitz prison. All

‘Hermann’ bomb forces museum evacuation

The SC1000 as discovered in the bucket of a 360 excavator COURTESY OF MACC INTERNATIONAL LTD

The discovery of an unexploded SC1000 bomb on December 3, 2024 necessitated tourist attractions be evacuated in Southsea, Portsmouth. The device was found by a digger operator involved in coastal defence works near Clarence Esplanade.

The police were called shortly after 0930hrs, with cordons put in place in the Pier Road area. Nicknamed the ‘Hermann’ after the portly Luftwaffe chief, approximately half the weight of the 1,000kg general-purpose bomb comprised of a filling of Trialen 105 explosive or, more commonly, a 40/60 ratio of amatol and trotyl. Because of Portsmouth’s naval base and other military, industrial and trade facilities, the city was heavily bombed during World War Two, enduring at least 69 air raids, with the heaviest sprung on August 24, 1940, and January 10 and March 10, 1941.

The cordon placed around the bomb meant the nearby D-Day Museum and Blue Reef Aquarium had to be evacuated, as well as Clarence Pier and sections of Southsea Common. It is understood that no residential areas needed to be cleared. Royal Navy EOD technicians attended the scene, with the SC1000 carefully removed. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary confirmed the lifting of the cordon at 2130hrs.

While the MOD and other authorities have provided no further comment, it is believed the device was taken out to sea and destroyed in a controlled explosion.

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but three of the 76 escapees were recaptured and 50 of them were murdered. Long is thought to have been one of the last men to have been killed, having been last seen alive on April 13, 1944, by Flight Lieutenant Max Ellis. Ellis was involved in the Great Escape, but had independently broken out of the Belaria subcamp the same day.

After a deal with a private collector, Long’s campaign awards – which include his MiD Oak Leaf, awarded for his bravery as a POW – were presented to IX Squadron at its RAF Lossiemouth base in December 2024.

Museum seeks Anderson shelters for display

They were once commonplace fixtures in British gardens, with some 3,600,000 installed – *BAW*’s editor even remembers playing inside one in the grounds of his Kent primary school – but Anderson shelters are increasingly rare today. According to website andersonshelters.org.uk, as few as 15 might remain in their original locations.

However, a Hull-based museum is hoping to acquire two original Andersons to add to its heritage collection. Recently reopened after four years, the facility is situated at the 16th-century Fort Paull, formerly used as an ammunition store during World War Two. Nick Moore and Nick Taylor, who campaigned to reopen the site and renovate it, have issued an appeal to locate two Andersons and a Morrison shelter – an indoor cage-like protective unit – for display.

The Fort Paull team hope that, as Hull was heavily bombed in World War Two, the number of shelters issued would have been large and some they may rest “unloved and unused” in the vicinity. Produced out of corrugated iron sheets and half buried in the ground before being covered in a thick layer of earth, Anderson shelters were cold, dark and damp, but they were resilient and saved lives.

Nick Taylor told *BAW*: “So far, we have been donated one Anderson shelter and we are looking for a local company to restore it for us. I think it will be extremely hard to find a Morrison shelter, but it would be great to locate one!”

The museum plans to use one Anderson to house a Home Front display and aims to rebuild the second shelter within the grounds as it would have been installed during World War Two, ideally, complete with a wartime community garden above it.

Portsmouth hosts first autonomous raiding craft trials in UK waters

An uncrewed naval vessel has sailed in British waters for the first time. The Pacific 24 rigid-inflatable craft – the mainstay of Royal Navy and Royal Marine small boat operations – was both autonomously piloted and controlled remotely by a Royal Marine from the navy’s experimentation ship XV Patrick Blackett. Known as an APAC, the 25ft long craft can be armed and is capable of 38kts. While the navy has tested the APAC overseas, it is the first time the craft was sailed in the busy Solent, where it navigated around ferries, other warships and private vessels. The first tests took place in November 2024, then resumed in January 2025 and are expected to continue until February 28. LPHOT OLIVER LEACH/MOD

Veteran Bomber Command airman gets BEM

Colin Bell with a Dakota ahead of 2024's D-Day commemorations ALASTAIR GRANT/AP/ALAMY

Our congratulations to former RAF airman Colin Bell DFC, who received the British Empire Medal in the 2025 New Year's Honours List.

Flight Lieutenant Bell was born in Royal Tunbridge Wells in 1921, joined the RAF in late 1940 and completed his pilot training in the United States. Flying Mosquitos with 608 Squadron – a Pathfinder unit – from 1943, Bell received the DFC during World War Two, flying 50 operational sorties over Germany, typically over key industrial cities including Bremen, Magdeburg, Hamburg, Nuremberg and Dresden. He also flew 13 sorties to Berlin.

Bell retired from the RAF in 1946 and worked as a chartered surveyor until at least 2019. However, for many years he has been supporting military charities such as the RAF Benevolent Fund as well as giving talks and lectures to share his wartime experiences and to raise awareness of RAF Bomber Command. He has received his richly deserved BEM for his charitable services, which have included his participation in fundraising challenges, such as a three-day sponsored walk in August 2023 and abseiling the 17-storey Royal London Hospital the following month – when he was 102!

At 103, Bell is the oldest recipient on the 2025 list. Another veteran to feature is George Kelly, a former RAF navigator. The 101-year-old received the MBE for his voluntary services to the Royal British Legion, which he has supported for more than 40 years.

WWII horror trek recreated for charity

The experiences of thousands of POWs forced to march west from Stalag Luft III will be remembered when 30 descendants of the forced participants march the route for charity.

'The Long March', the evacuation of the famous Stalag Luft III POW camp in Sagen (now Żagań), Poland, began overnight on January 27/28, 1945. With Soviet forces only a dozen miles or so from the camp, it was emptied of its approximately 10,000 Western Allied POWs, who were marched west in a three-mile column to Spremberg, where they were entrained for other camps. While not a 'death march' per se, the conditions were inhospitable, with the men marching almost non-stop for seven days for 53 miles in temperatures as low as -25°C. They lacked suitable clothing and were short on rations. Maltreatment from the guards was common, with those who fell behind or too ill to continue simply abandoned at the roadside.

The Sagen movement was part of a series of marches from POW camps, with some 80,000 men moved west during one of the coldest European winters on record. It is not known how many POWS died, but US and British/Commonwealth deaths are estimated at 3,500 on all the marches by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Some 120 men from Stalag Luft III are thought to have perished.

A group is to recreate the Stalag Luft III-Spremberg march, following the route in a bitter Germano-Poland winter to raise awareness of the POWs' plight, honour those forced to participate and to raise funds for military charities. One of the participants is James Castle, who explained to the Royal Navy that he was inspired to take part by his RAF great uncle, Tony Parsons – who was on the forced march – and by Fleet Air Arm Lieutenant John Kiddell.

Shot down on a raid against German invasion barges near Schiphol on July 2, 1940, Kiddell, an 825 NAS Swordfish pilot, was held at Stalag Luft III alongside other inmates including Carry On film star Peter Butterworth. In fact, Kiddell was the inspiration for the fictional character Flying Officer Archibald Ives in the film The Great Escape. In the 1963 classic, Ives, played by Angus Lennie, is shot dead attempting to scale a fence after suffering a mental breakdown. In life, Kiddell was shot dead in July 1943 after he refused to come down from the camp hospital roof, which he climbed after also suffering a breakdown. He was 24.

Stalag Luft III is now a museum, and the three-day charity march has been organised by the museum. James is raising money for the Defence Medical Welfare Service and hopes to raise £500. The charity provides medical welfare and support to those who are serving and veteran personnel.

James will also carry the charity's standard and hopes to commemorate Lieutenant Kiddell at the camp before joining the march. He said: "The original march started in a -20°C blizzard… I hope that we will be doing it in the snow – I would like to have a minor experience of what they endured."

To support James, please see: justgiving.com/campaign/dmwsthelongmarch

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During this eight-day tour of Greece, as we journey south from the mountainous Bulgarian borderlands. The imposing forts of the Metaxas Line in Northern Greece that still dominate the surrounding countryside; Mount Olympus, home to the Greek gods, and the magical Vale of Tempe; the Allied first line of defence; the pass at Thermopylae held by the Spartan 300 in 480BC and New Zealand warriors 2,400 years later; Athens, home to democracy and headquarters of the German occupying forces; and the Corinth isthmus which has witnessed the march of armies throughout time.

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The Gallipoli Campaign

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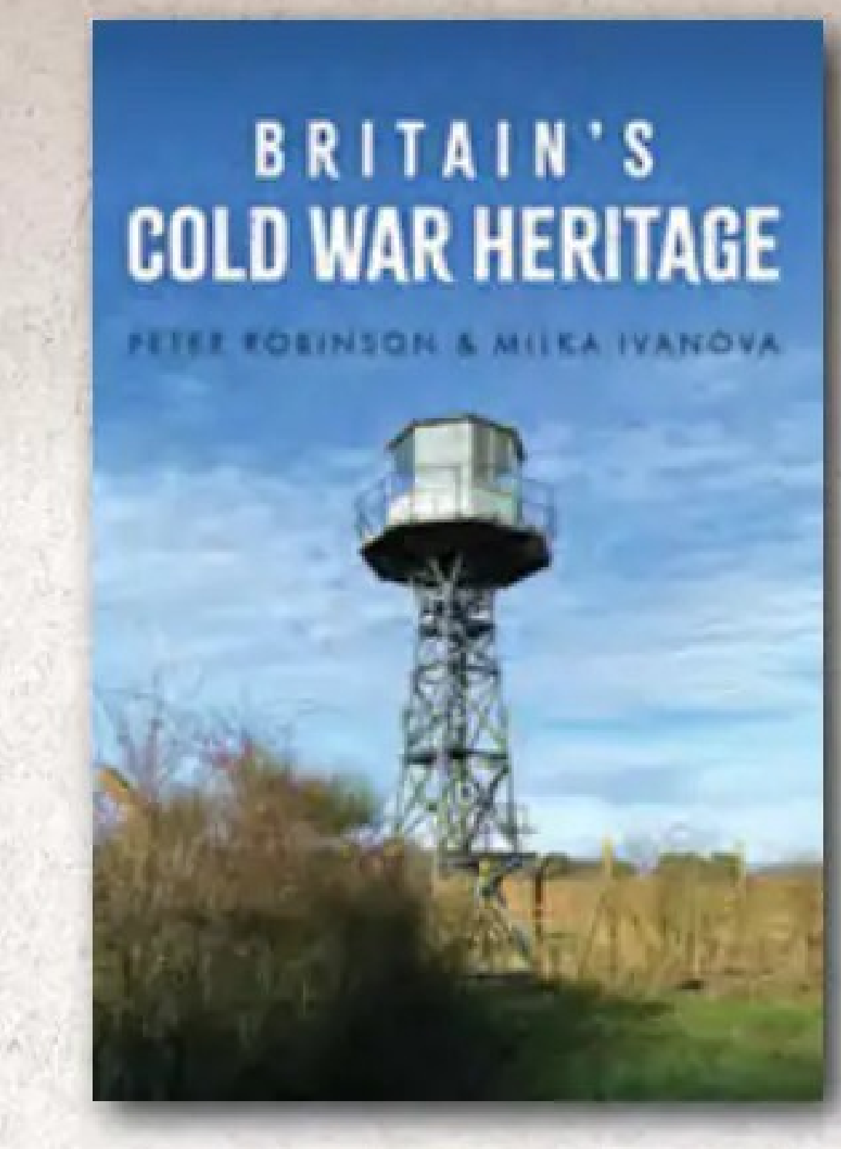
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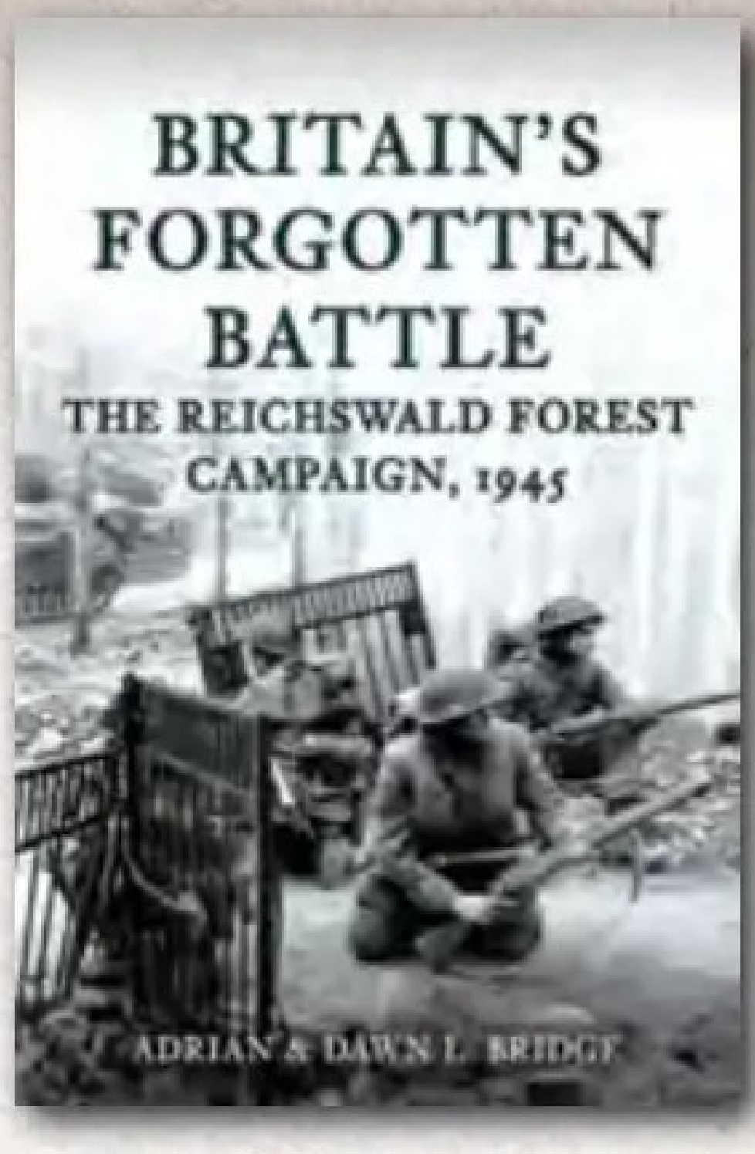
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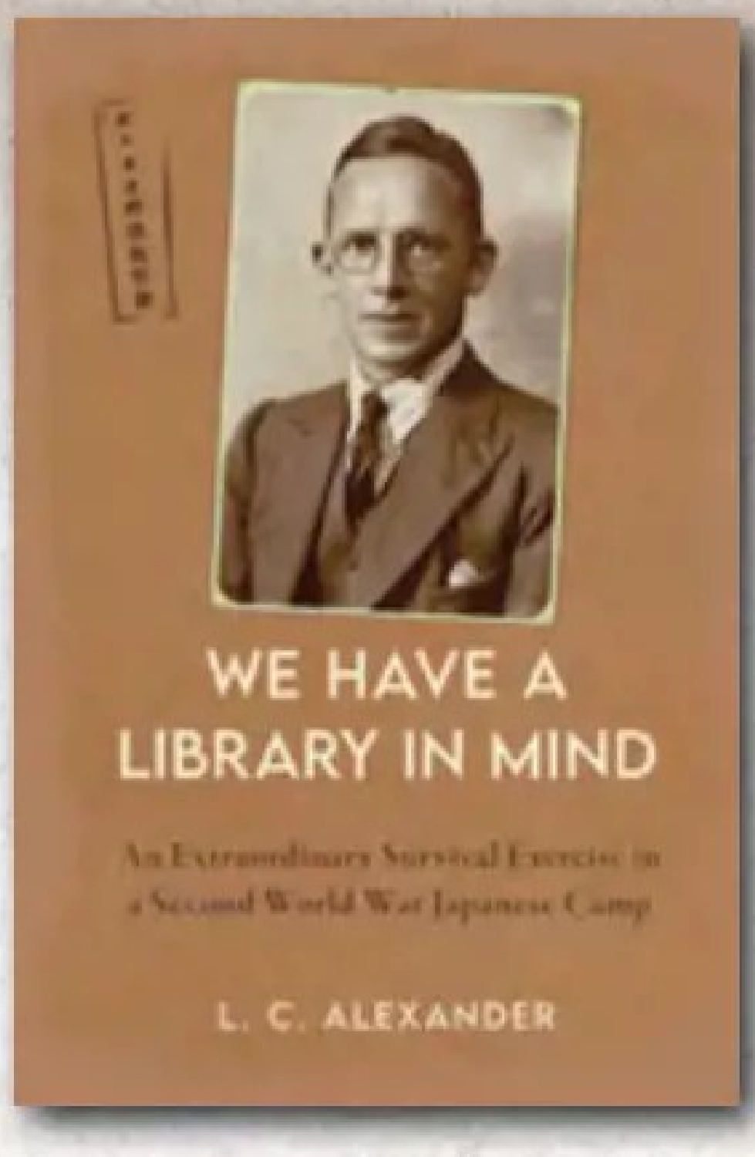
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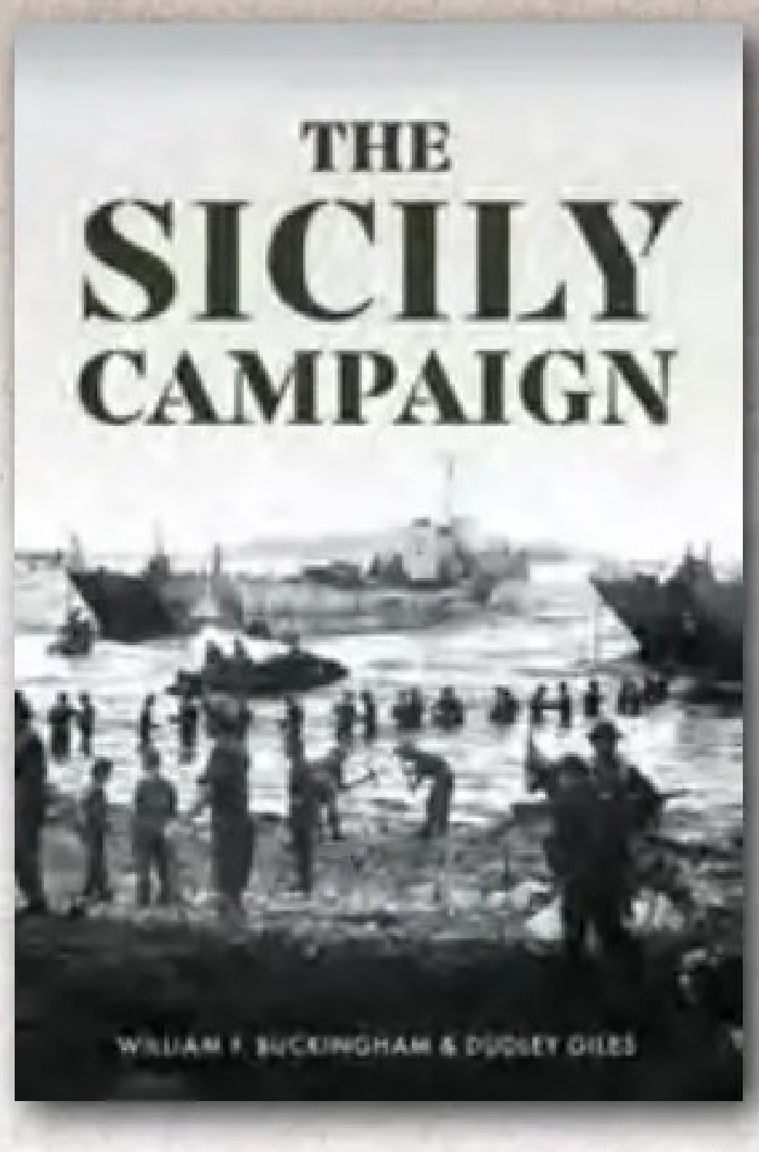
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Falklands deaths announced

Three significant figures involved in the 1982 Falklands Conflict have died, all in November 2024.

Colonel Euan Houstoun, who led 'G' Squadron, 22 SAS during the conflict, died aged 78. Tasked with reconnaissance and inserted by helicopter, the unit provided valuable intelligence informing airstrikes, artillery barrages and naval gunfire support.

Described as an "outstanding commander and a natural leader", Houstoun joined the 1st Grenadier Guards in 1964. According to *The Telegraph*, he was the first officer in 359 years to miss the Ceremony of the Keys, which takes place at the Tower of London at 2200hrs. After entertaining guests in the Tower as part of his ceremonial duties, he took a nap and missed his alarm. Summoned by the Tower's governor, he was threatened with arrest and ordered to report to his CO.

Houston passed the gruelling SAS selection and joined 'G' Squadron as the commander of 24 (Air Assault) Troop. He deployed to Kenya and also undertook counter-insurgency operations in Oman. In 1979, he was given command of 'G' Squadron and awarded the MBE for his efforts in Northern Ireland.

In the Falklands, 'G' Squadron completed 28-day patrols across open and rocky ground, with little cover from the elements. Its reports caused significant damage to Argentinian forces, and the patrols suffered no losses, However, 'G' Squadron was shaken by the deaths of 22 SAS men – eight from the squadron – and 846 NAS crewmen after a Sea King HC.4 crashed on May 19, 1982.

Post-Falklands, Houstoun commanded the 1st Grenadier Guards in Germany, for which he received the OBE. He also served as Commandant of the Combined Arms Training Centre and as a defence attaché to Israel. He retired in 2001 and was president of the Grenadier Guards Association and the HMS *Trincomalee* Trust.

Sir John Nott visiting the Falklands garrison in October 1982. He was Britain's Defence Secretary during the conflict SSPL/GETTY

Lieutenant-Commander Ian 'Crash' McLaren died age 67. He served on HMS *Fearless* and commanded MV *Monsunen* during the conflict. *Fearless* was a principal landing ship and the HQ for Commodore Clapp and Brigadier Thompson. McLaren was assigned to lead a prize crew in *Monsunen*, a small freighter belonging to the Falkland Islands Company that had been requisitioned by the Argentines and run aground. The ship was repaired and pressed into British service. At dusk on June 8, *Monsunen* sailed on a mission to locate the bombed LCU *Foxtrot 4*. Having found the wreck, McLaren had to abandon the tow and, when he returned, saw no sign of her. The ship then ferried troops and stores around the islands until June 25.

McLaren joined the navy in 1976 and served on the destroyer *Fife* and the frigate *Avenger*. He later commanded the patrol boats *Cutlass* and *Scimitar*. Post-Falklands, McClaren was loaned to the Omani Navy before specialising as a principal warfare officer. He then served in the frigate *Broadsword* and as operations officer in the destroyer *Gloucester* during the First Gulf War. He was unknowingly involved in the first missile-versus-missile engagement at sea when his ship downed a Silkworm fired at USS *Missouri*. McLaren was off watch and asleep at the time, but was Mentioned in Despatches for the skill with which he had trained his team.

He later held staff appointments and participated on operations in Bosnia from the carrier *Illustrious*. He was appointed MBE and saw out his naval service as an attaché, retiring in 2000. He later worked as a naval security consultant and as a civil servant in the Department for Business and Trade.

Sir John Nott, who died aged 92, was appointed Defence Secretary in 1981 and his part in the conflict remains controversial because the severe cuts outlined in Nott's 1981 Defence White Paper are cited as a factor in prompting Argentina's aggression. The measures proposed the scrapping of the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ships (which was reversed before the conflict), the sale of an aircraft carrier and a reduction in escort vessels as well as the withdrawal of HMS *Endurance*.

After the invasion – during which Nott confessed he had to look up where the Falklands were – he was pessimistic about their recovery and criticised for failing to foresee the attack. Already reeling from rows over his White Paper, he twice offered his resignation but was refused, seeing out the war as defence secretary before standing down as an MP in 1983. Before he resigned, he published a White Paper that reversed many of the planned cuts to the surface fleet and replaced its losses, as well as introducing stronger shipborne air defence capabilities. All aircraft lost in the conflict were replaced, with more Harriers and helicopters ordered, as well as 12 F-4J Phantoms to fill the gap left by a new permanent air deployment to the islands.

Triumphant to the end

The Royal Navy's last Trafalgar-class attack submarine has completed its final voyage and is expected to be formally decommissioned after 34 years of service.

Sailing from Faslane, HMS *Triumph* arrived at her home port, HMNB Devonport, in mid-December. Seen off at the start of her last journey by Clyde tugboats, she was escorted into Plymouth Sound by a variety of support vessels while streaming her decommissioning pennant.

The Trafalgar-class comprised seven nuclear-powered attack submarines with the lead ship commissioning in May 1983. *Triumph*, the final boat, was commissioned in October 1991. All submarines of the class were constructed at the then Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering yard in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. The 'T-boat' design was developed during the Cold War with the principal objective of hunting Soviet submarines, but instead they spent much of their careers deployed further afield, particularly in the Middle East. Armed with Spearfish torpedoes, the class is considered to have been one of the best hunter-killer designs of the period.

The decommissioning pennant streaming from *Triumph's* fin POPHOT ALEX CEOLIN/MOD

Much about the careers of *Triumph* and her sisters remains secret, but highpoints in her career include a 1993 deployment to Australia, during which she travelled 41,000 miles without surfacing, which set the record for the longest solo deployment by a Royal Navy submarine at the time.

From 1998, after the introduction of Tomahawk land attack missiles into Royal Navy service, the T-boats were modified to enable the launch of the cruise missiles, which all British fleet submarines now carry and operate. This gave the Trafalgar-class a useful strike capability, which was utilised on several occasions. On two occasions, *Triumph* returned home with the 'Jolly Roger' fluttering from her fin – the traditional celebration denoting a successful patrol or mission – having engaged Taliban and Al Qaeda targets in Afghanistan with her Tomahawk cruise missiles during Operation Veritas and launching the same weapons in March 2011 during Operation Ellamy against forces loyal to former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, hitting the presidential compound among other targets.

The submarine is to be officially decommissioned in a formal ceremony in early 2025, although no date had been disclosed at time of writing.

Rear Admiral Andy Perks, Royal Navy Director Submarines, said: "The last of the Cold War submarines, these vessels have helped keep our country safe for more than 30 years. Having spent many years serving in Trafalgar-class SSNs, it is with both pride and sadness that I see these excellent submarines reach the end of their career."

The Trafalgar-class has gradually been replaced by Astute-class, of which the sixth, Agamemnon, was launched in October 2024 and the final boat, Agincourt, is expected to enter service in 2026. BW

***Triumph* crosses Plymouth Sound escorted by the tugs SD *Powerful*, SD *Hercules* and (out of shot) SD Faithful, firing their water cannons in salute** POPHOT ALEX CEOLIN/MOD

***Triumph* leaving the Clyde on her final voyage** POPHOT BARRY WHEELER/MOD

***Triumph*'s crew wave to some of the onlookers who arrived to greet the submarine** POPHOT ALEX CEOLIN/MOD

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Despatches

A letter from 'Monty', the medals of an SAS major and a rare British firearm have teased bidders in recent sales

FROM MALAYA TO EUROPE

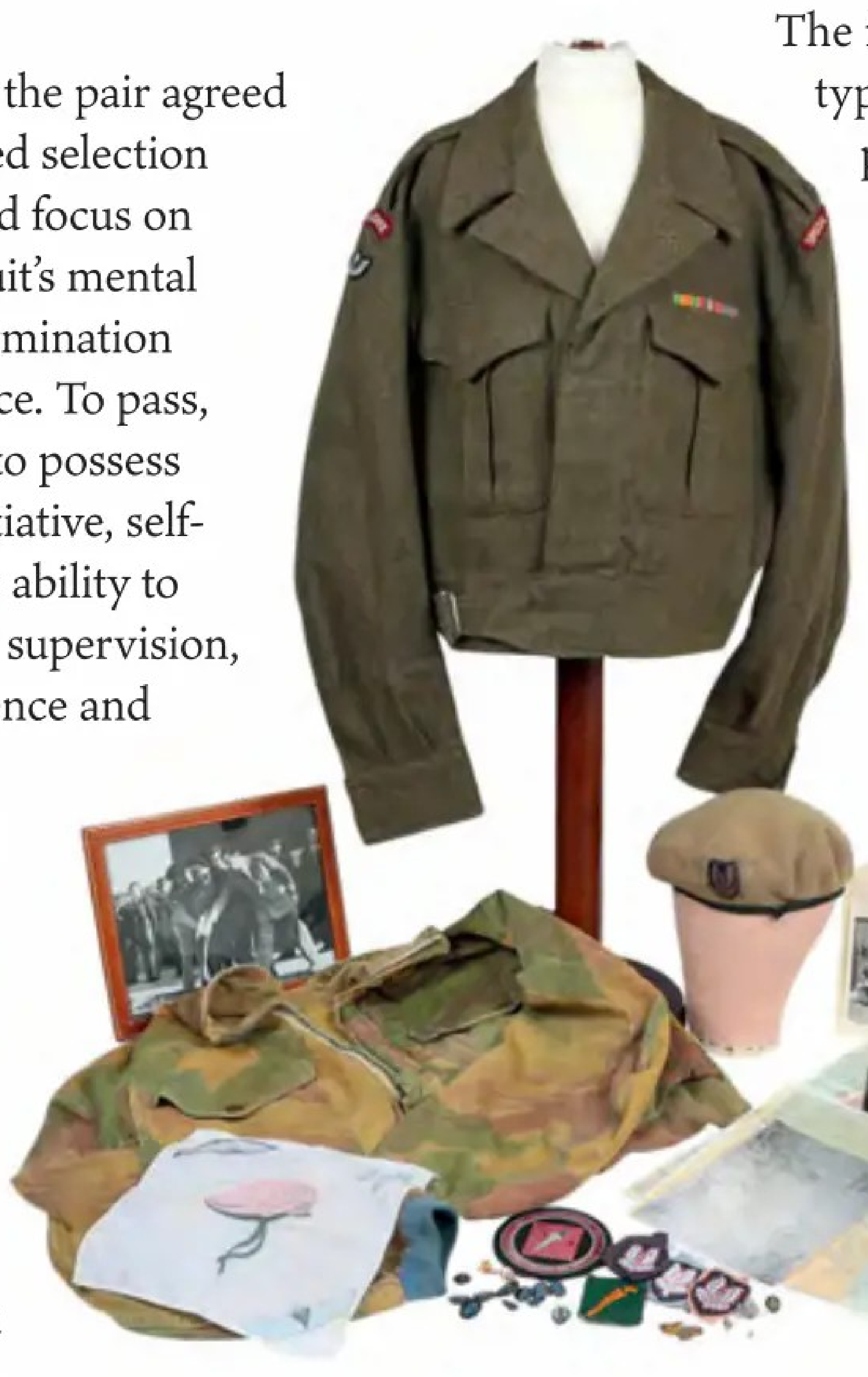
A letter from Monty to troops of the 21st Army Group, an airborne recognition scarf and a selection of items belonging to an officer of the re-formed SAS interested buyers at Bishop & Miller

Fetching £1,600, a grouping belonging to an officer associated with the re-formed SAS of the 1950s was a highlight of Bishop & Miller's Militaria December 2024 auction.

The lot, which included items such as two rare photographs of SAS operations during the Malayan Emergency, a 1949-pattern battledress blouse, 1950s SAS parachute wings, a Denison smock, a 1939-1945 British War Medal and General Service (Malaya) Medal and a marked RAF aeronautical chart of Malaya, belonged to SAS veteran Major Stuart Perry.

Born on February 21, 1926, Perry entered Sandhurst in 1944 and was commissioned the following year into the 12th Lancers. In August 1953,he transferred to the SAS, reconstituted following its disbandment in 1945. Joining 22 SAS during the height of the Malaya Emergency, Perry soon took command of 17 (Boat) Troop, 'D' Squadron, and was tasked with engaging in jungle warfare to clear out communist insurgents. At the time, Perry served alongside well-known characters associated with the re-formed regiment, including 'Mad Mike' Calvert, John Woodhouse, Mike Jones, Jonny Cooper and 'Gentleman Jim' Almonds, the last two being founding members of the original 'L' Detachment, 1 SAS in 1941.

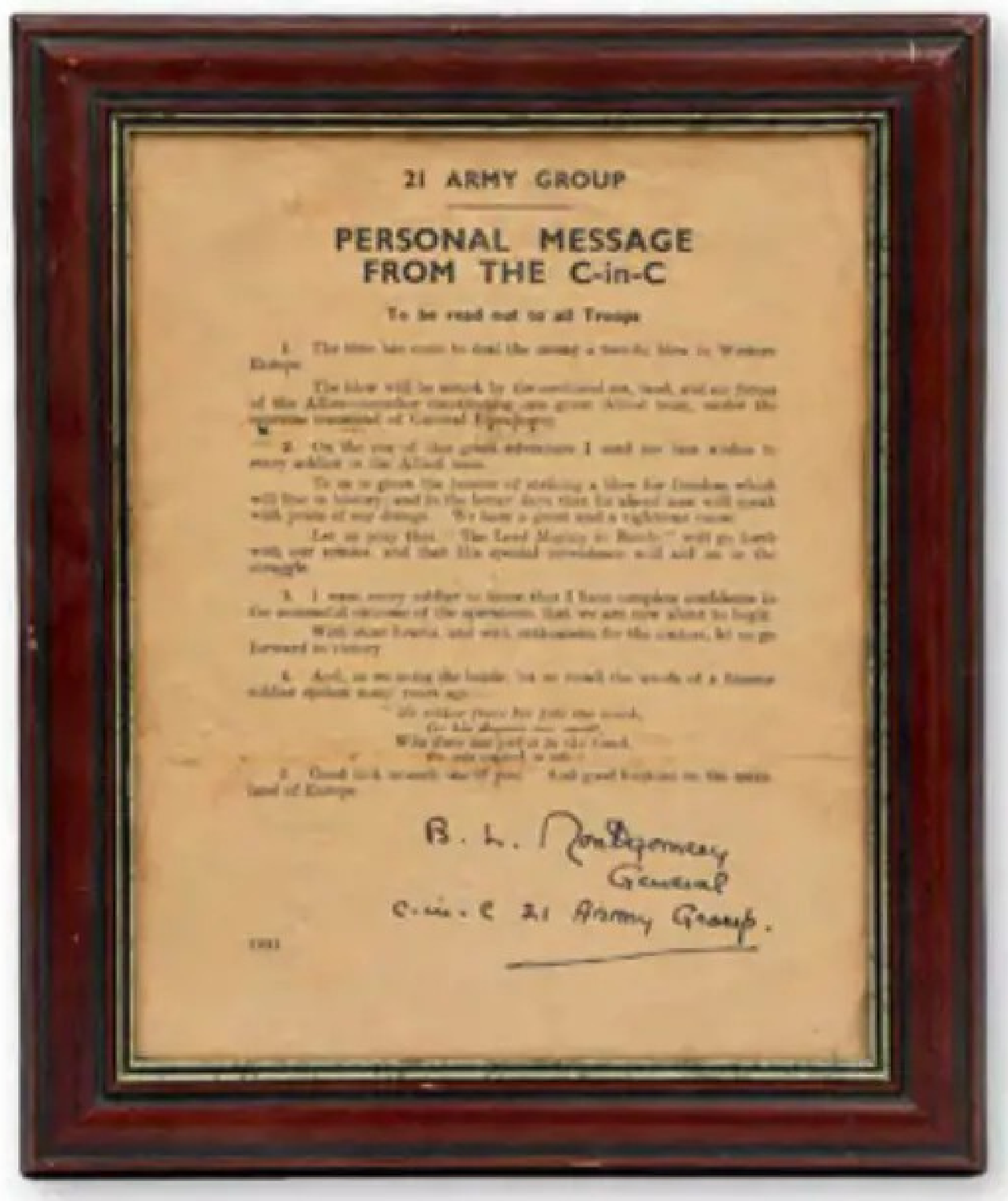
By 1955, Perry – now a Major – discussed creating a comprehensive system for selecting recruits with his best friend, Major Charles Laurence 'Dare' Newell. After seeking the advice of former LRDG commander Colonel David Owen, the pair agreed that the revised selection process should focus on testing a recruit's mental attitude, determination and intelligence. To pass, a recruit had to possess individual initiative, self-discipline, the ability to work without supervision, stamina, patience and a sense of humour. The new process would also assess the applicant's reaction to loneliness and to the unusual when exhausted, as well as their attitude to discipline when spent, cold, wet and hungry. Seeking an ideal testing ground, Perry chose the Brecon Beacons in Wales, which offered suitably rugged terrain, good shooting ranges and close proximity to the unit's base in Hereford. Retiring from the SAS in 1956, Perry continued to serve in the Territorial Army's 21 SAS (Artists Rifles) until 1968.



Also included in the December auction were two items associated with the British Army's campaign in Europe in World War Two: a British airborne recognition scarf and a personal message from General Montgomery to troops of the 21st Army Group on the eve of the Normandy Landings.

The fluorescent yellow silk scarf was of the type issued to both British and American paratroopers. Laid out surrounding their held positions or worn draped over their backpacks, the scarfs were used as an aid in identifying Allied forces and preventing attack by friendly aircraft. Given a guide of £80-£120, the lot beat its estimate, fetching £170.

Meanwhile, the framed personal message from Monty to his troops sold for £124, smashing its £40 upper estimate. Issued to the men on the eve of June 6, 1944, the signed message from the C-in-C of the 21st Army Group stressed that "the time has come to deal the enemy a terrific blow in Western Europe… struck by the combined sea, land and air forces of the Allies. On the eve of this great adventure, I send my best wishes to every soldier in the Allied team. Good luck to each one of you. And good hunting on the mainland of Europe."



21 ARMY GROUP

PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE C-in-C

To be read out to all Troops

B. L. Montgomery
General
C-in-C 21 Army Group.

IMAGES: BISHOP & MILLER

"EXCEPTIONAL" BRITISH SMG SHOOTS THROUGH TARGET

A forgotten British submachine gun has sold at Morphy Auctions in the United States

Overshadowed by the wartime Sten and post-war Sterling, the Lanchester rose from an RAF requirement for a submachine gun for airfield defence. However, the British Admiralty also expressed interest in procuring such a weapon and the firearm, first produced in 1941, saw the lion's share of its use in the Royal Navy.

Designed by George Lancaster and produced at the Sterling Armament Company, W W Greener and Boss & Co, more than 96,000 Lanchesters were built in two main variants, the original Mk.I and the simplified Mk.I*. Based on captured German MP-28 submachine guns, the Lanchester Mk.I was a well-made and reliable weapon that featured a heavy wood stock copied from the SMLE

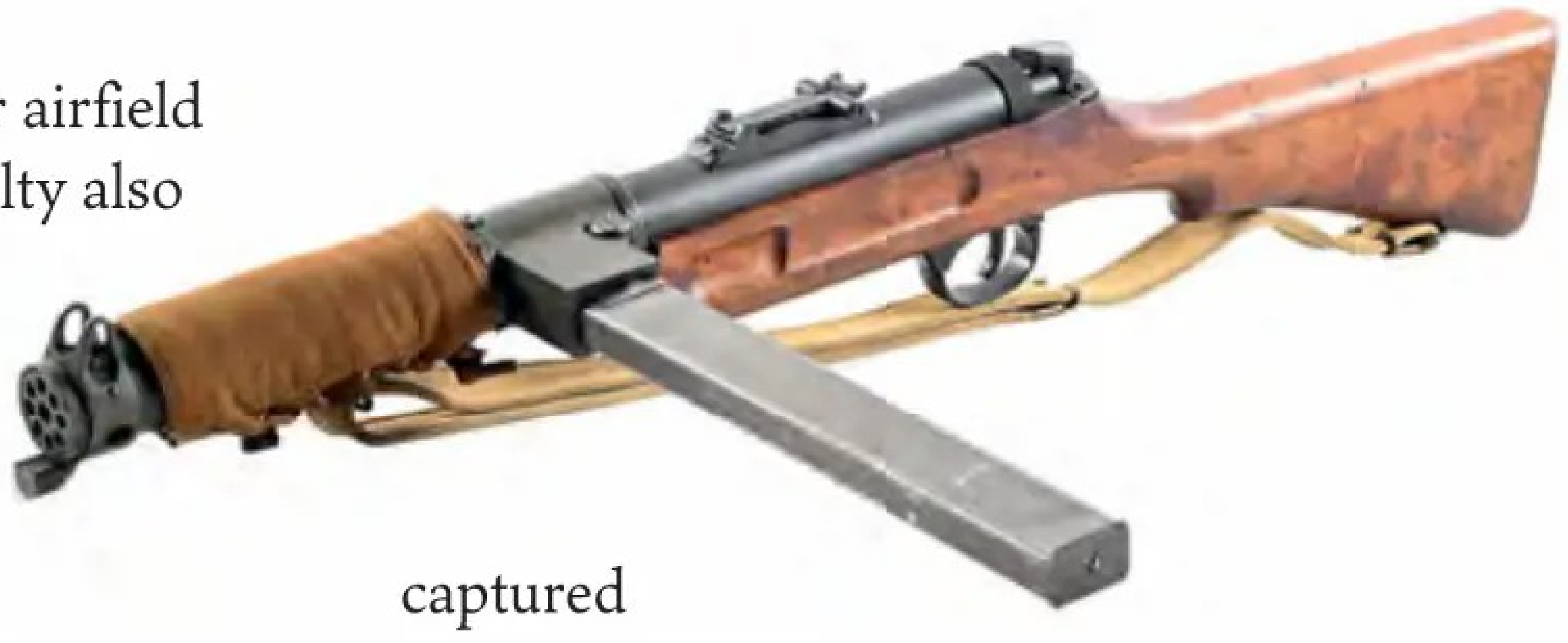


IMAGE: MORPHY AUCTIONS

rifle and a durable construction comprising a machined-steel action and breech block and brass (later steel) magazine housing. A select-fire, blowback weapon firing 9mm Parabellum rounds from 32- and 50-round magazines, it used an 8in barrel with cooling shroud and could fire 600 rounds per minute. The weapon could also mount a Pattern 1907 sword bayonet, while the Mk.I* omitted the fire selector and used simplified sights.

Eventually replaced post-war by the Sterling submachine gun, the Lanchester officially left Royal Navy service in the 1970s, but may have lingered in ship's armouries for longer. It was also adopted by the Canadians, who used it until the 1960s, as well as several other nations, where it remained in use into the 1980s. One has been reportedly recovered by Israeli forces in 2023, seized from a Hamas cache.

The sold example is an original 1942-dated Mk.I, serial 16478A, produced by Sterling and sold with a single 50-round magazine, a selection of 32-round magazines, bayonet and an original sling and canvas barrel shroud cover. Its condition and finish were described as "extremely fine to near excellent". Indeed, a quote from the auctioneer reads: "One of the very finest examples of this scarce British machine gun this cataloguer has ever encountered. This is a fabulous find for the British gun collector, as well as a very fun, pleasant, slow-firing and historical classic machine gun one can take to the range."

The "exceptional, immediately recognisable" specimen – a functional, fully transferrable ATF Form 3 or 4 curio and relic firearm requiring BATF approval – was given an upper guide price of $18,000, but fetched $26,400 including premium.

IMAGES: NOONANS

BATTLESHIP HUNTER'S 'SCOOTER RAID' MEDAL SELLS

The DSM awarded to a naval mechanic whose boat is credited with sinking a battleship has sold at Noonans

Born in Chesterfield in June 1900, Chief Motor Mechanic Baden Masters, RNVR, served on CMB 88 in Russia during the civil war. He participated in a daring raid on Kronstadt, where his craft sank the pre-dreadnought battleship *Andrei Pervozanni* and damaged the Gangut-class dreadnought *Petropavlovsk*.

Masters joined he RNVR as a mechanic in 1918, but returned to his civilian employer , Rolls-Royce, in 1919. That July, he was invited to volunteer for service in the Baltic, which he accepted. He joined CMB 88, one of eight craft assigned to the Scooter Raid of August 1919. Led by Commander C Dobson DSO, the force entered Kronstadt harbour, exploiting a diversionary air raid to slip beneath the large guns of the coastal forts at about 0430hrs. In the ensuring chaos, CMB 88 lost its captain, Lieutenant Dayrell-Reed, who was shot through the head, forcing Lieutenant C Steele to move the dead man's slumped body from the controls and take the helm. Steering for *Andrei Pervozvanni*, Steele launched a torpedo at just 100 yards, then manoeuvred his vessel in tight confines to engage *Petropavlosk*, which was obscured by the other battleship. Steel received the VC.

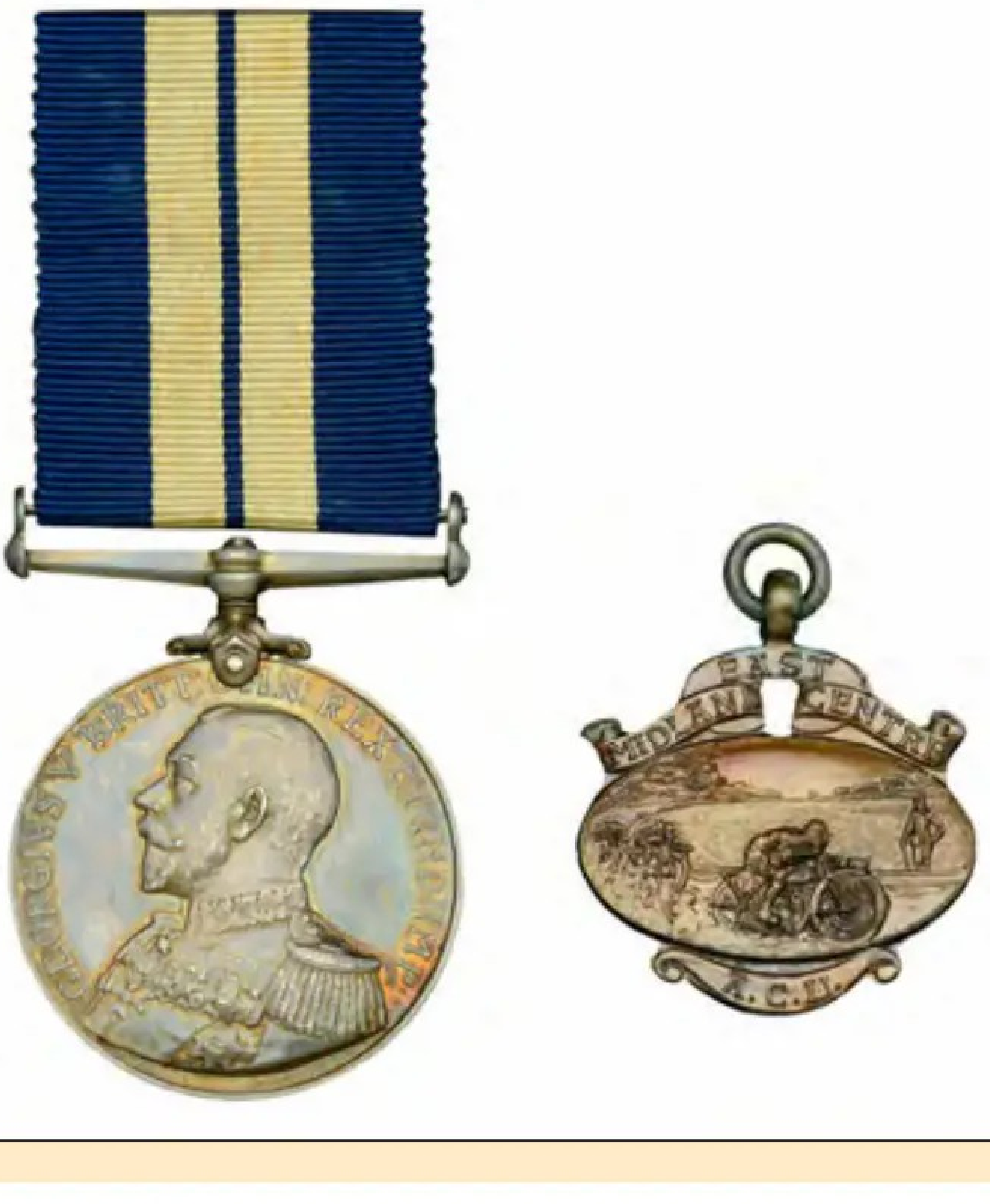
Masters earned the DSM for his part, which he described in a letter: "We gave the Bolshies hell on Sunday night, or rather 2am Monday. [CMB] 88BD had the honour of leading the attack and was told to put under a big battlecruiser which they have been after for a long while, and they knew that 'Blood' Reed [Lieutenant Reed] was the only man to do it. Well, we put her under, and also another big cruiser.

"Before we set off Reed had me in his cabin, also the other mechanic, and he told us of the honour we had received in being chosen to go right into Kronstadt harbour, and he said if we do not sink her we will put up a good fight, and all go down together. We had a drink with him and then went down to our boat. We had a good look over our engines, and Reed said, 'For God's sake Masters, do what you can for us, as it is up to you to get us in and get us out again.'

"We went straight through the fort without being seen, then into the harbour. We shot past guns of every description. Then CMB 79 got a shell, then CMB 62 got put down, and then No 24. We made straight for our cruiser and blew it up with a torpedo, then we went for another one with our remaining torpedo, which split her in two and she sank. Bullets were all the time flying through our boat until it was like a pepper box. Reed got shot through the head and fell dead, and I got hit in the thigh, but it is better, and I have got some of the bandages off already.

"I then got the order 'Full speed ahead' and I knew we were scooting off. One big shell dropped just astern of us and blew us clean out of the water. We got out of the harbour, then we had all the forts to get through. The shelling started again, but we were doing about 55mph and they could not touch us. All the time coming back I had to keep filling my tin hat with oil and pouring it into the oil tank, as it was shot through. With one leg useless, as it had got numbed, the engines burst just as we got into safe waters, as I could not keep it up any longer. I was properly jiggered up and completely exhausted."

Masters was recommended for the CGM by Rear-Admiral Walter Cowan, but this was downgraded to the DSM. He later became a motorcycle racer, but was killed in a crash in September 1923, just two weeks after he married. His DSM was sold with his bronze East Midland Centre ACU motorcycling prize medal and two original letters, including his account of the raid. Estimated at £4,000-£5,000, the lot fetched £5,500.



FORTHCOMING SALES

- **Noonans** February 12 & March 12, 2025
- **McTear's** February 12, 2025
- **1818 Auctioneers** February 13-March 2, 2025 (timed auction)
- **Warwick & Warwick** February 19, 2025
- **Richard Winterton Auctioneers** February 26, 2025
- **Adam Partridge Auctioneers & Valuers** March 4, 2025
- **Toovey's** March 5, 2025
- **Tennants Auctioneers** March 19, 2025

NOTE:Listings include medals, militaria, arms and armour, war art and other historical-themed sales. Dates and catalogues are subject to change. Check websites for details and updates.

Debrief

We used Google Trends to find six common questions on **Lend-Lease...** and now an expert gives informed answers

THIS MONTH'S HISTORIAN: **JOHN BRYLOR**

What was Lend-Lease?

Signed into law on March 11, 1941, Lend-Lease – officially 'An Act further to promote the defense of the United States, and for other purposes' – was an extension of previous aid programmes such as Destroyers for Bases and Cash and Carry. It was part of President Franklin D Roosevelt's ambition to enable the United States to provide practical support without directly entering the war.

The day the act was signed, ships sailed for Britain and Greece. Supplies to China and Norwegian Forces-in-Exile followed and, from November, the Soviets. At first, the aid comprised mostly foodstuffs and industrial commodities, with the first tanks arriving in November. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Lend-Lease expanded and became more co-operative and multilateral.

As vital as Lend-Lease was, with the exception of the Free French, no major Allied power was solely dependent on it and American-sourced war equipment only totalled about 10% of Britain's wartime military assets.

What controversies surrounded it?

The United States was determined not to be dragged into another European conflict and non-intervention was enshrined in The Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937, preventing the sale or movement of arms to warring nations.

Prior assistance to Britain stretched these rules, but the aid was being paid for and collected by them. However, they were running out of assets to pay for it. Roosevelt wanted to circumvent these issues, arguing that Lend-Lease was essential for keeping the war away from the US. This he did in his Fireside Chat of December 29, 1940.

Public opinion started to shift and by February 1941 just 22% of Americans polled were against aiding the British. Effective British lobbying and propaganda, as well as the drive of Roosevelt and his allies, moved the needle. Opposition was strongest among Republicans in Congress: 69% of Democrats were in favour, but just 38% of Republicans were. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives on February 8, 1941, by 260 votes to 165. The Senate passed the act on March 8.

However, Soviet detractors criticised the late arrival of Lend-Lease and suggested that they received insufficient materiel, while the support of a Communist regime was controversial in the US. Both in Britain and America opinions have surfaced about the perceived exploiting of Lend-Lease for profiteering. Some argued Britain's contribution was greater than the merit given to it, and interest on repayments was another sticking point.

US President Franklin D Roosevelt signing the Lend-Lease bill in 1941
EVERETT COLLECTION/ALAMY

The rapid termination of Lend-Lease in September 1945 also rankled, but the US argued the war was over, and future support should be under new terms. In April 1948, the Marshall Plan was announced, a $13.3bn package for rebuilding shattered European states – including Britain, the largest beneficiary, which received some $3.3bn.

How much did it cost?

It is difficult to pin down as some elements, such as the provision of bases, are hard to quantify in terms of cost, but, overall, Lend-Lease totalled at least $50,100,000,000 – some

British soldiers stack tonnes of propellant shipped from Tennessee inside a tunnel in western England NARA

$672,000,000,000/£39,605,210,000 today – and more when British/Commonwealth contributions are included.

By 1943, the United States was providing goods and services at the rate of some $1bn each month, rising to $1.5bn by mid-1944. Including some $680m of equipment and stores transferred to Allied forces in the field, the aid totalled some $35,382,646,000 by December that year. Canada sent at least $2bn in material and loans in aid to British, while Anglo-Canadian aid to the USSR passed £1.15bn.

Was 'reverse Lend-Lease' a thing?

Yes, and reverse Lend-Lease was as diverse as US aid, providing anything and everything from tea kettles, wrenches, rope, chrome, asbestos, barrage balloons, Spitfires and Mosquitos. Americans drank Nigerian cocoa, drove on tyres made from Ceylon's rubber and operated ships built in English shipyards.

Anglo-Commonwealth assistance to the United States also included the use of fast liners to move its troops and the use of bases, depots and hospitals, while all bread consumed by US troops in Britain came from British flour, and the British supplied some weaponry and vehicles. Australia supplied food, clothing, bases and other desirables to the value of $550m by July 1944, and New Zealand spent $131m. In fact, in summer 1944, both had sent more supplies to the US than had been sent to them. In the China-Burma-India theatre alone, British/British-Indian aid totalled $232m by July 1944.

Reverse Lend-Lease totalled $8bn, about 87% of which came from the British. The US government disclosed that 31% of "all the supplies and equipment required by the US Army in the European Theater of Operations between June 1, 1942, and June 30, 1944", was supplied by the British.

Britain also involved the US in technological programmes and shared advances. British minds were committed to the Manhattan Project, while designs for the jet engine, cavity magnetron radar, proximity fuze, supercharger, gyroscopes, gunsights, self-sealing fuel tanks and plastic explosives were provided to the US via the Tizard Mission and other inter-Allied initiatives.

The British also supplied the Soviets, sending £308m in munitions and £125m in food, materials and medical supplies. British aid to the USSR included 7,400 aircraft, 6,400 tanks and armoured vehicles, 5,000 anti-tank guns, 15 million pairs of boots, 2,000 radar/sonar sets, 30,200 miles of cabling, 28 warships and submarines, large quantities of rubber, aluminium, coffee and tea, antibiotics and £1,400,000 in diamonds. Britain also made a costly, symbolic commitment with the Arctic convoys.

What were the most surprising shipments?

The scale of Lend-Lease was huge, and the US supplied 31,000 aircraft, 27,000 tanks and 637,000 other vehicles as well as 3,200 ships. According to a January 1945 study, of every 100 tanks produced by the Americans between March 1941, and June 1944, 41 were Lend-Leased. Of every 100 aircraft, 15 were Lend-Leased.

A curious situation developed when Britain essentially Lend-Leased its own weapons to itself. Canadian-produced Boys anti-tank rifles were shipped to the US, stamped with US markings, and sent via Lend-Lease. The British also lent the battleship *Royal Sovereign* to the Soviets, which was returned post-war in an appalling condition. The British also lent the aircraft carrier *Victorious* to the US Navy.

Just 54% of Lend-Lease concerned warfighting equipment. At least 21% comprised petrol, oil and lubricants, metals, textiles and leather, machine tools, machinery, chemicals, lumber, coal and medicine. Another 13% comprised foodstuffs and agricultural support, and Lend-Lease food made up about 10% of Britain's total supply. Therefore, Spam, eggs, cheese and fruit juice are all 'surprising' items sent through Lend-Lease.

One of the most exported vehicles was the reliable Studebaker US6 2½-ton truck. Some 150,000 were supplied to the Soviets, forming about half of all lorries sent to them. Its all-terrain capability arguably made it the most important vehicle in the Soviet arsenal, as indigenous lorries were not as capable and in short supply. In addition to the more than 400,000 tanks and vehicles, and 14,000 aircraft sent to the Soviets, they received 1,500,000 blankets.

However, perhaps the most surprising element of Lend-Lease is that 12% of the spend was needed for the bases, ports, pipelines, roads and factories for it to work, as well as shipping/ferrying costs, repairs and rentals.

Was Lend-Lease repaid?

Britain settled its debts. Assets supplied by Lend-Lease were essentially provided at no cost, but surviving equipment was liable for repayment, so much was destroyed post-war or handed over to liberated countries. What the British were actually repaying were long-term loans used to purchase shipments sent just before, but arriving after, Lend-Lease was terminated.

In 1946, the British negotiated to repay £2.2bn. The final payment was sent on December 29, 2006 – some £42,500,000 – with the total repaid amounting to about £3.8bn. Britain's final £11,600,000 payment to Canada was also paid in 2006.

In 1972 the Soviets agreed to repay $722,000,000 but only paid $48,000,000 by 1973 when payments ceased. Only in 1992 did the Russian Federation acknowledge its liability and in 2006 it announced that all "Soviet-era debts" had been paid, which presumably includes Lend-Lease.

France was exempted from reimbursement and Canada, Australia and New Zealand had minimal payments due to goods and services provided by reverse Lend-Lease.

Field Post

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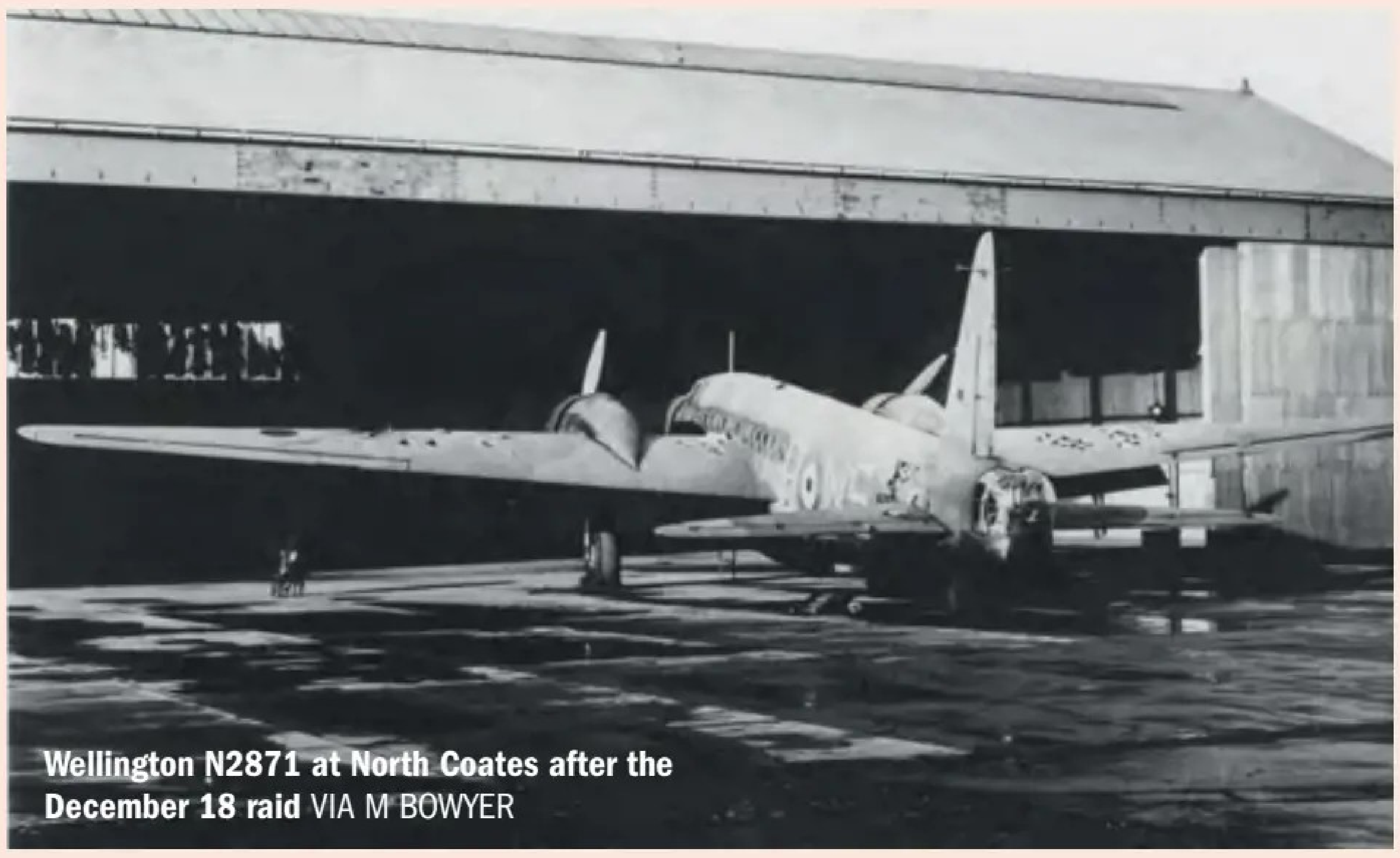
Battle-scarred 'Wimpy'

I enjoyed the editor's breakdown of the Wellington bomber (*Tough as a boot, BAW*, December 2024), in which he referred to the first Wellington raid of the war.

As highlighted, this took place on September 4, 1939, and 9 Squadron was one of the participating units. There followed several further daylight formation raids to attack enemy shipping off the German coast, culminating in the disaster that occurred on December 18. That morning, 24 Wellingtons from 9, 37 and 149 Squadrons headed for Wilhelmshaven, home to the Kriegsmarine's main naval base and which was bomber numerous times during the war. However, on this occasion, the bomber force was intercepted off the coast. Just ten Wellingtons returned, most of which carried fresh battle scars. One of the surviving aircraft was Wellington Mk.Ia, serial N2871/WS-R, a 9 Squadron bomber that Flying Officer W Macrea managed to land at North Coates on the Lincolnshire coast, despite the heavy damage evident in the accompanying photo. The illusion of daylight bombing in formation had been truly shattered.

Tom Spencer



Wellington N2871 at North Coates after the December 18 raid VIA M BOWYER

Fairmile foul up

In Andrew Thomas's excellent article about 524 Squadron hunting German E-boats with its bombers (*Wellingtons vs the boots, BAW*, December 2024), there is a misidentified photograph accompanying the *Terror of the tides* panel which claims to show surviving German E-boats towards the end of World War Two. The photo actually shows three Fairmile D-class motor torpedo boats of the Royal Norwegian Navy, identifiable by the Norwegian Jacks flown on the jackstaffs and the crews' uniforms (ratings, a dark cap with dark pompom, white collars to their jumpers).

I can understand how the Jacks could be misidentified as Kriegsmarine flags, but also of interest are the visible Type291U surface search radar antennas and Type 253 IFF transponder.

I hope this helps!

Steve Lacey

Editor: Whoops, clearly we need to brush up our vexillology! Thanks, Steve, I know Andrew will be as pleased as I am to set the record straight.

Yugo 'Tommy gun' origins?

I read with interest John Ash's article on the Thompson submachine gun (*Tommy Atkin's Tommy gun, BAW*, December 2024), which profiled the iconic firearm in British service, including its brief introduction to British service by Captain (later Major) Hugh Pollard when based in Ireland during 1921.

As John points out, the Thompson continued in use in many militaries for several decades after World War Two, including Yugoslavia and its former constituent parts as the nation disintegrated in the 1990s. However, I would suggest that the Yugoslavian Thompsons faced by British forces in the 1990s were those supplied by the Special Operations Executive during World War Two, rather than being supplied by the Soviets. These guns were intended to be used against the Germans, but were more often employed against other partisan groups.

Additionally, Major Pollard is a fascinating character. He is straight out of Edwardian heroical fiction and well worth an article on his own – not least because he was the man who smuggled Francisco Franco back into Spain to take command of the Nationalist forces in the 1930s.

Patrick Walker

Editor: Thanks, Patrick. Mea culpa!

I was referring to Ukraine in my explanation that Thompsons in modern conflicts may have come from Soviet stocks, but I was not as clear as I ought to have been. Reports suggest that Thompsons have appeared in the hands of soldiers on both sides, but this is not unusual for a conflict that, so far, has seen many vintage weapons and vehicles reintroduced.

Nevertheless, you raise an interesting point. I did some digging to find out how the Yugoslavian Thompsons were sourced. In addition to SOE-supplied guns, it appears captured French examples used by German units were seized by partisans. Post-war, the Yugoslav Army received 35,000 as part of a US military aid package and subsequent sales. These guns, as well as wartime vehicles including M18 Hellcat and M36 Jackson tank destroyers, were used during the 1990s by Yugo forces and the breakaway factions that later became independent nations, such as Croatia. The Thompson appears to have been particularly popular with Bosnian forces.

Until I can get further confirmation, I would suggest that M1921 Thompsons in Yugoslavia were likely captured guns taken from German forces, and M1928 and M1 variants were supplied by Allied organisations during World War Two or procured via post-war arms transfers and sales.

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KEY Publishing

BATTLING THE WEATHER

In early 1945, Canadian Typhoons struggled against the elements to support the Allied advance through the Reichswald and to the Rhine

Words: **Andrew Thomas**

Artist's impression of a pair of 438 Squadron Typhoons having dropped their bombs on German vehicles concealed in the forest below ANTONIS KARIDIS

Before the advance to the Rhine proper could begin, it was necessary to eliminate a 250 square mile German-held salient along the Dutch border between Roermond and Linnich. Much like the ground ahead of Normandy's Bourguébus Ridge the previous summer, every farm and hamlet had been fortified and artillery and armour had been dug in.

Operation Blackcock was designed to eliminate this opposition and began on January 16, 1945. The assault was supported by the Typhoon fighter-bombers of 438 Squadron, RCAF, which was based at an advanced landing ground, B-78 Eindhoven, as part of 143 Wing, 2nd Tactical Air Force (2TAF). On January 20, Squadron Leader 'Jimmie' Hogg arrived to take command and, throughout the day, 143 Wing Typhoons maintained cab ranks – patrols over the front with the aircraft waiting to be called down to support ground forces by an RAF controller embedded with land forces. Weather permitting, there would always be a squadron in the air, circling overhead until called in to bomb targets marked by the troops with red smoke.

438 Squadron groundcrew show off their stock of liberated 'smokes' as they decorate a 500lb bomb at Eindhoven ALAMY

"Operation Veritable was launched that day and, as expected, quickly devolved into a grim struggle through waterlogged and muddy terrain against a determined foe"

On January 22, the squadron gave direct support to men caught up in heavy fighting around Montfort, which resulted in the surrender of 600 enemy troops. However, the flak was heavy and, during an afternoon strike on Montfort, Flying Officer Frank Skelly was killed when his Typhoon, MP128/F3-X, was hit and exploded over the target.

The following day, strongpoints around Heinsburg, Schleiden and Uetterath were struck by the Canadian Typhoons, but over Uetterath, RB333/F3-R was downed by flak as it tipped into the dive, killing Flying Officer Ivan Wallace. After a hard fight, the troublesome salient was captured and a pause ensued before the start of the push to the Rhine, which necessitated the British and Canadians take the Reichswald.

Imperial ambition

The Klever Reichswald or Imperial Forest in the North Rhine-Westphalia comprised more than 5,000 hectares of dense woodland on the Germano-Netherlands border between the Rhine and Meuse. Historically, the forest was grown and maintained under the direct control of the Holy Roman Empire, producing wood and timber to fulfil imperial requirements, as well as being used for hunting, charcoal production and livestock grazing,

Fast-forward a few centuries and the Reichswald was again important to the defence of Germany. Here, the Siegfried Line was at its strongest, with some 90,000 German troops occupying three distinct lines of defences or being held in reserve. The thick woodland, rugged terrain and ground turned soft by the winter rains and snow, as well as by deliberate flooding, greatly hampered vehicle movement and nullified Anglo-Canadian advantages in equipment, mobility and manpower. No paved east-west route ran through the forest and whatever small roads did exist were rapidly destroyed by the heavy traffic. However, if the British 21st Army Group could penetrate the line in the forest and press its attack, it would soon find itself on the banks of the Rhine, poised to spring an attack over the river and into Germany's heartland.

Air power, therefore, would be absolutely vital to the progress of the offensiive. Even before the effort began, 438 Squadron participated in a campaign of rail interdiction sorties to isolate the border area. This resulted in spectacular results on February 6, when three rail strikes were flown. Around midday, one section led by Flying Officer Philip Macklem in PD476/F3-E with Warrant Officer Gord Errington in RB207/F3-T, Flying Officer Andre Lord in the newly delivered RB429/F3-X and Pilot Officer A Harle in F3-F spotted 200 rail cars parked under canvas covers and these were thoroughly strafed.

Operation Veritable, the long-awaited drive through the Reichswald to the

Rhine, was launched that day and, as expected, quickly devolved into a grim struggle through waterlogged and muddy terrain against a brave and determined foe. Some 200,000 British and Canadian troops in six infantry and three armoured divisions from the Canadian First Army and the British XXX Corps were eventually sent in to clear the forest in a large pincer operation. However, they found it challenging to advance and supply themselves in the mire, necessitating the use of amphibious vehicles.

There was no flying on February 7, but 438 Squadron returned to rail attacks the next day. On its third mission, it made a direct attack on German troops using the new 500lb cluster bombs, although there were only sufficient munitions for ten aircraft, with the other five armed with 1,000lb bombs. Squadron Leader Hogg, flying F3-Q, led the attack, but it was delayed as the weather had closed and he only departed in the mid-afternoon.

Wunderwaffe wreckers

Later, on February 8, the Tiffies were led in by Flight Lieutenant Bob Coffey to attack more railway lines behind the front, again facing heavy flak. Meanwhile, the squadron's groundcrew came in for particular praise, working flat out to rearm and refuel aircraft back at Eindhoven in the most miserable conditions, having to rearm the serviceable aircraft with cluster bombs at short notice to support a looming ground assault.

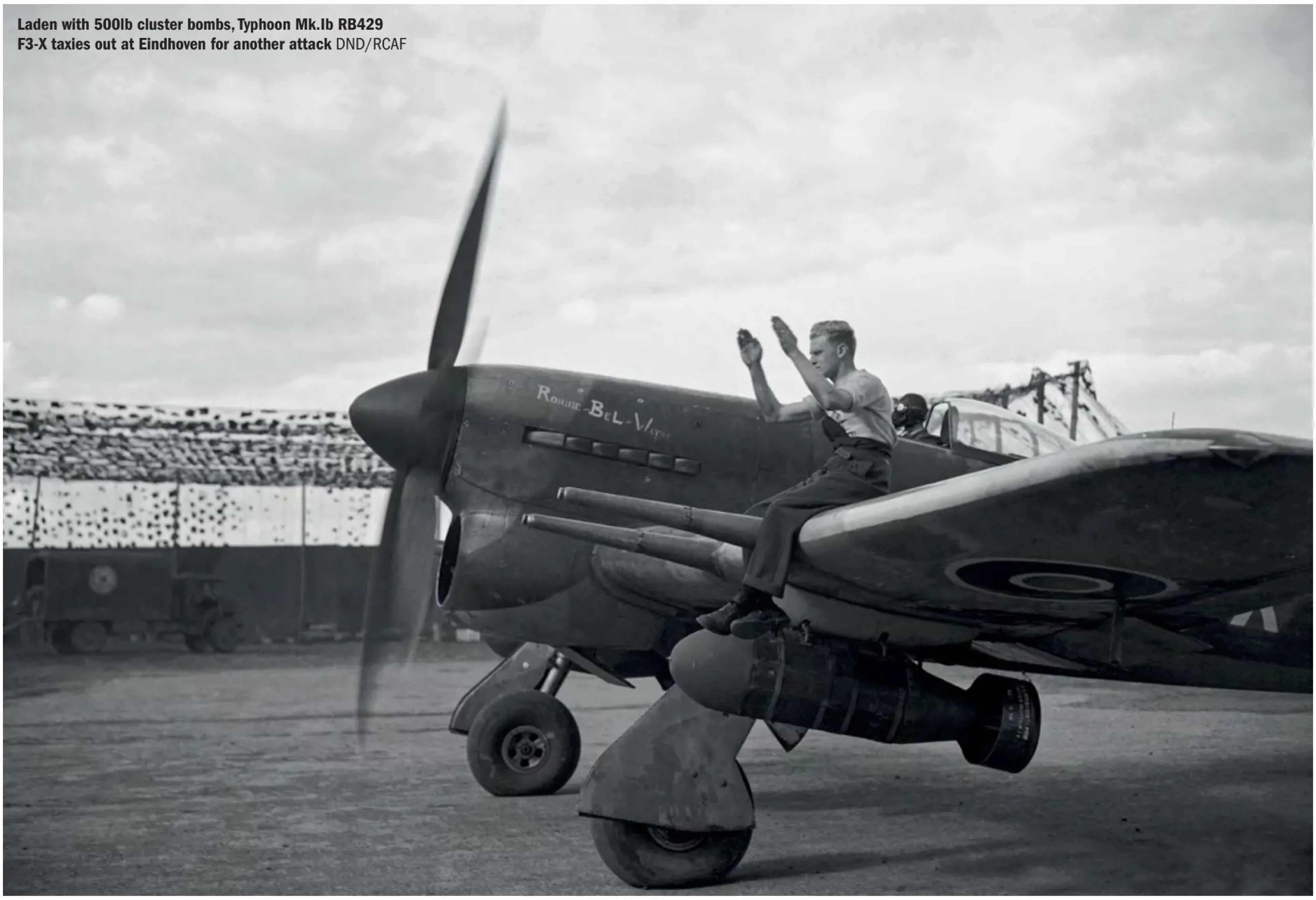
The weather was to play a large part through the rest of the month, precluding operations for ten days. Despite the incessant rain that made the dispersal areas more like lakes, on February 10 a trio of four-aircraft sections led by Hogg, Coffey and Flight Lieutenant McAlpine set out on another rail interdiction, making a cut over a road bridge. Two missions were flown the next day and five armed recces on February 13, albeit with generally insignificant results.

On February 14, the weather finally improved and the support 438 Squadron and the rest of 143 Wing gave to the ground forces battling forward was the most successful since Falaise the previous summer. The Typhoons worked under high pressure through the day, not helped by a minor resurgence in Luftwaffe fighter activity. The first eight-strong section, led by the CO, took off at 0800hrs and found good weather over the target near Geldern, attacking a train of 30 mixed trucks, damaging the locomotive and ten wagons. However, light flak struck

A 438 Squadron Typhoon taxies across a flooded dispersal at Eindhoven during the period when operations were hampered by bad weather DND/RCAF

The experienced 'Jimmie' Hogg DFC took command of 438 Squadron as it began operations in support of the Allied push to the Rhine DND/RCAF

A column of Churchill and Stuart tanks with other vehicles on the starting line prior to Operation Veritable OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



Laden with 500lb cluster bombs, Typhoon Mk.Ib RB429 F3-X taxies out at Eindhoven for another attack DND/RCAF

Blown dams, poor weather and muddy conditions necessitated the British bring in amphibious load carriers such as this Weasel and DUKW as they pushed through the Reichswald on February 15, 1945 OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Typhoon RB226/F3-H, which crashed south of the town. Its pilot, Flying Officer Allan Nixon survived.

Valentines' Day was the squadron's busiest of the month, with ten further four-aircraft sections flying rail interdiction sorties, scoring six cuts of the lines, with three locomotives and 15 goods wagons damaged.

Key to sustaining the Allied advance was the major Belgian port of Antwerp. In an attempt to disrupt the supply lines, the port facilities were targeted by V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets launched from mobile sites in the Netherlands. Antwerp had only been restored to full operations a few weeks previously and the acute supply situation was easing. However, significant damage to the port could reintroduce some scarcity of core components and stores, and the so-called 'Wunderwaffe' had the potential to cause havoc.

On February 16, the Wing attacked V1 storage facilities and launch sites at Puttershoek, to the southwest of Rotterdam, with direct hits claimed. No.438 Squadron's eight bombers were led by the CO and were among those claiming good results. As he recalled: "There was a great column of smoke from the target as I left. Just before that a big explosion shook us. I figure one of the bombs hit a rocket bomb or some other explosives."

Flight Lieutenant Bob Coffey was one of 438 Squadron's more experienced pilots and led many of the attacks DND/RCAF

> *"There was a great column of smoke from the target as I left. Just before that a big explosion shook us. I figure one of the bombs hit a rocket bomb"*
>
> SQUADRON LEADER 'JIMMIE' HOGG, CO, 438 SQUADRON

Ground fog and rain precluded much flying for several days, although a 30-minute stand-by was maintained should the weather clear. The V1 weapon sites were typically well protected, so aircraft flying flak suppression sorties accompanied the main strike package. This was the case on February 21, with rocket-firing Typhoons from 181 Squadron and 440 Squadron 'Tiffies' dropping cluster bombs to cover an attack. No.438 Squadron's bombers led by Hogg then arrived, but Errington's Typhoon, PD476/F3-E, was hit as he tipped in to attack. Streaming glycol, he baled out near Piershil and was captured. Another pilot, Flying Officer Off Bob Fox, noted: "Site well hit; W/O Gord Errington hit; baled out; OK in enemy territory."

A section of 438 Squadron Typhoons with 1,000lb bombs underwing taxi out at a muddy Eindhoven DND/RCAF

RAF/RCAF Typhoons were efficient in disrupting German rail links, including the targeting of trains and marshalling yards in addition to blowing bridges or cutting the lines MIRRORPIX/GETTY

Despite this loss, the attacks were judged as highly successful, with all bombs falling in the target area. Three further missions were mounted during the day by pairs or quartets of Typhoons led by Macklem, McKay and, in late afternoon, Flying Officer Ray Oldfin, targetting railways.

Closing in on the Rhine

Rail interdiction was vital for isolating the German defences, thus remained a primary task. In brighter weather on February 22, 438 Squadron achieved excellent results and made 24 cuts in the line. The CO led five aircraft to create an impressive eight cuts with just ten bombs. However, on the return, the Typhoons were jumped by USAAF P-51s, fortunately without damage.

After another day of poor weather, February 24 dawned bright and clear, with an early mist soon dispersing. A trio of the CO, Flight Lieutenant Burden and Flying Officer Lord bombed a railway north of Wesel, but without seeing the results. Ten minutes later, a section led by Coffey with Flying Officer D Campbell and Pilot Officer J Dewar bombed a rail marshalling yard at Borkern. Despite facing heavy flak, they destroyed five freight wagons and caused general confusion. Over the town of Goch, the section was attacked by 15 Messerschmitt Bf 109s. Fortunately, the Germans opened fire at long range, enabling the Canadians to escape into cloud. However, one result of this more aggressive Luftwaffe tactic was that the squadron's formations were enlarged to include a couple of clean aircraft – armed only with their guns – flying as escort.

Mid-morning on February 24, 11 Typhoons, each armed with two 1,000lb bombs with 11 second delays, bombed a railway and marshalling yard, destroying four wagons and damaging five more. That day's final mission got airborne at 1620hrs and, on his third sortie of the day, Flying Officer Bill Beatty, who led a section, completed his tour after 95 sorties. They flew a rail interdiction, cutting the line in five locations.

After some armed recces early on February 25, the weather cleared and the CO led eight aircraft to spearhead a Wing attack on a V1 launch site near Dordrecht, bombing flak positions with cluster bombs. Frustratingly, the poor weather returned, preventing almost all further activity for the next couple of days. However, despite the overcast conditions, two sections led by Lord and Coffey flew on armed reconnaissance behind German lines. On the ground below, they spotted Canadian troops in action between the Maas and the Rhine.

A huge amount of air power was committed to attacks isolating the east bank of the Rhine ahead of the 21st Army Group front, both tactical and strategic, and 143 Wing concentrated on rail links into the area. In beautiful fine weather on March 2, the Wing raided the rail marshalling yards at Dulmen. Eight aircraft from 438 Squadron, led by Fox, found three engines with steam up and a number of tarpaulin-covered wagons, all duly strafed.

Later, at around 1130hrs, the CO led another rail interdiction, with Red Section bombing the same yard, causing a large explosion. Although the flak was sporadic, it was accurate and hit Typhoon Mk.Ib RB285/F3-Z flown by Flight Lieutenant Don Heard. He pulled up sharply after being stuck, then the tail separated. The aircraft crashed near Appelhulsen, unseen by his comrades. Miraculously, Heard managed to bale out and was captured. Blue Section then thoroughly strafed the

On February 24, Flying Officer Andre Lord was part of a section led by the CO that bombed a railway north of Wesel, while... J A LORD

...on the same day, Flying Officer Bill Beatty (left) flew three attacks and completed his tour having flown 95 sorties J A LORD

yard, setting several oil cars on fire and causing a large explosion. A few minutes later, 439 Squadron also lost an aircraft.

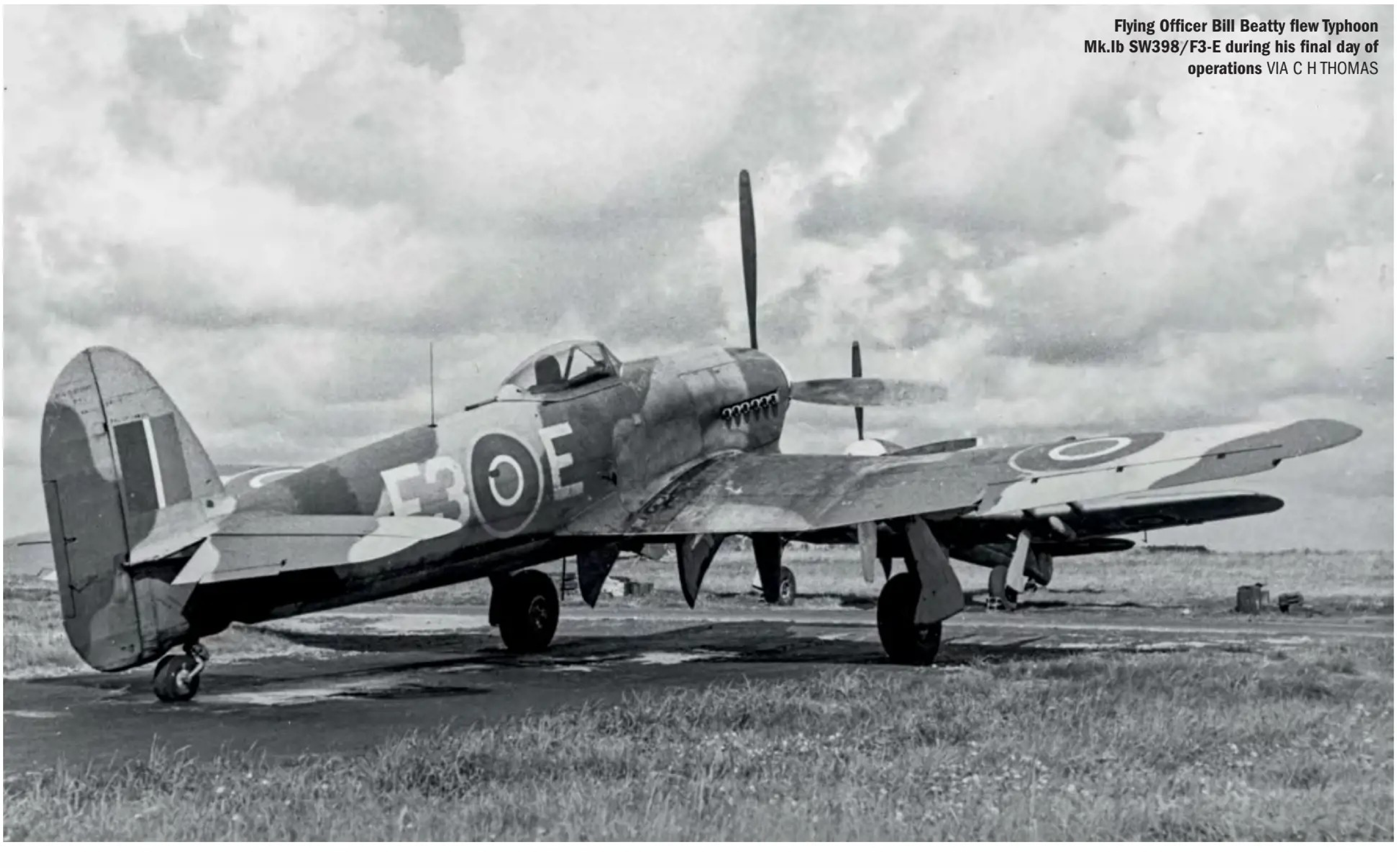
The third interdiction of the day took off at 1610hrs, when Macklem in SW398/F3-E led eight aircraft in a dive-bombing attack. The next day, two sections attacked marshalling yards at Bocholt, just east of the Rhine. In the early morning of March 5, Flight Lieutenant Bob Spooner led an attack on the railway near Coesfeld, with the CO leading a dozen aircraft on another sortie in the late afternoon that cut the line in several places.

Preparing for plunder

With Operation Veritable in its final days, just one mission was mounted on March 7, led by Bob Coffey. Twelve Typhoons attacked rail tracks, while Yellow Section, led by Fox in MN716/F3-A, bombed a train near Dulmen. Although they saw no hits, the pilots then strafed a train and a factory. Light flak hit three aircraft flown by Burden, Dewar and Campbell, but all recovered safely back to Eindhoven. Coffey's Red Section successfully bombed a train pulling 35 covered trucks in the face of intense flak.

By March 10, the western bank of the Rhine had been reached and cleared by ground forces. There was then a pause to prepare for the crossing of the river, which was planned for the Wesel area. Thus, 438 Squadron's next operation came on March 13, when Burden in led 11 Tiffies in dive-bombing attacks on the rail system. McAlpine's Yellow Section also attacked, damaging a locomotive and ten wagons with near misses.

On March 14, in bright skies and little cloud, the squadron mounted a full programme of rail interdiction, although


Flying Officer Bill Beatty flew Typhoon Mk.Ib SW398/F3-E during his final day of operations VIA C H THOMAS

The high tempo of operations and poor winter conditions were most trying for 438 Squadron's ground crew during the push to the Rhine, but... VIA L MILBERRY

"Two missions were flown on March 15, producing nine cuts in the tracks, adding to the increasing transport chaos in western Germany ahead of the imminent Rhine crossing"

visibility was markedly worse over the target areas. On the squadron's first attack, the 11 Typhoons were led by the 143 Wing leader, Wing Commander Frank Grant, in his personal Typhoon, with the formation leaving at 1300hrs. Their concentrated bombing attacks resulted in several cuts and all returned by 1430hrs. A subsequent attack by 12 Typhoons, led by Flight Lieutenant Spencer, departed at 1615hrs and bombed rail lines near Borken, with four cuts made.

Two separate missions were flown the following day, producing nine cuts in the tracks, adding to the increasing transport chaos in western Germany ahead of the imminent Rhine crossing. Unfortunately, heavy mist prevented any flying on March 16, although readiness was maintained throughout the day. On March 17, 438 Squadron flew its final mission in the push to the Rhine when Spencer led 11 aircraft, each armed with a pair of 500lb bombs, together with 439 and 440 Squadrons against a stores dump. All bombs landed in the target area, but results could not be assessed due to the visibility.

...the support of the squadron's Typhoons in the ground attack role helped to ease the British passage across the Rhine during Operation Plunder SSPL/GETTY

It is an indication of 2TAF's strength that, just days before the Rhine crossing, a major amphibious effort, a fully operational squadron was able to be withdrawn to Britain for rotational training provided by an Armament Practice Camp at Warmwell, Dorset. Thus the Canadian squadron was absent for the actual river assault itself, but during the intense battle that formed the Allied drive to the Rhine, 438 Squadron delivered more than 400 tonnes of bombs in almost 600 sorties.

In a tragic footnote, on the eve of the Rhine Crossing, Squadron Leader Hogg was killed after crashing into the sea off Portland, having survived months of intense operational flying. BW

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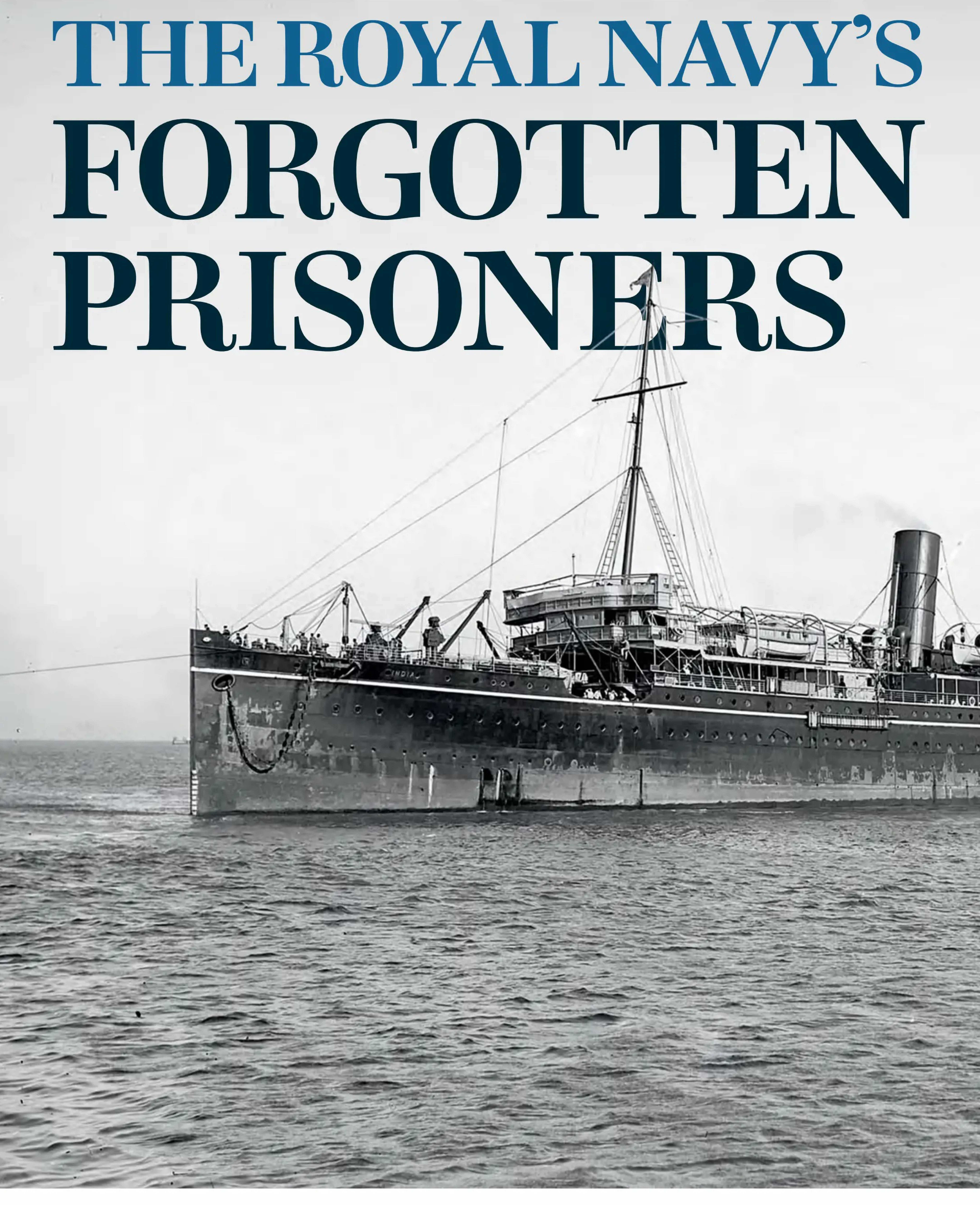
THE ROYAL NAVY'S FORGOTTEN PRISONERS



In August 1915, the luxury liner-turned-armed merchant cruiser HMS *India* met a bitter end. However, it would be years before the survivors – including **Rebecca Clarke**'s grandfather – could return home, and their experiences as internees sometimes bordered on the surreal

The P&O liner SS *India* in 1906. The ship was later converted into an armed merchant cruiser and used to enforce the World War One naval blockade of Germany JOHN HAGUE

The author's grandfather-by-marriage, HMS *India* crewman and Jørstadmoen internee Richard 'Arnold' Clarke ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

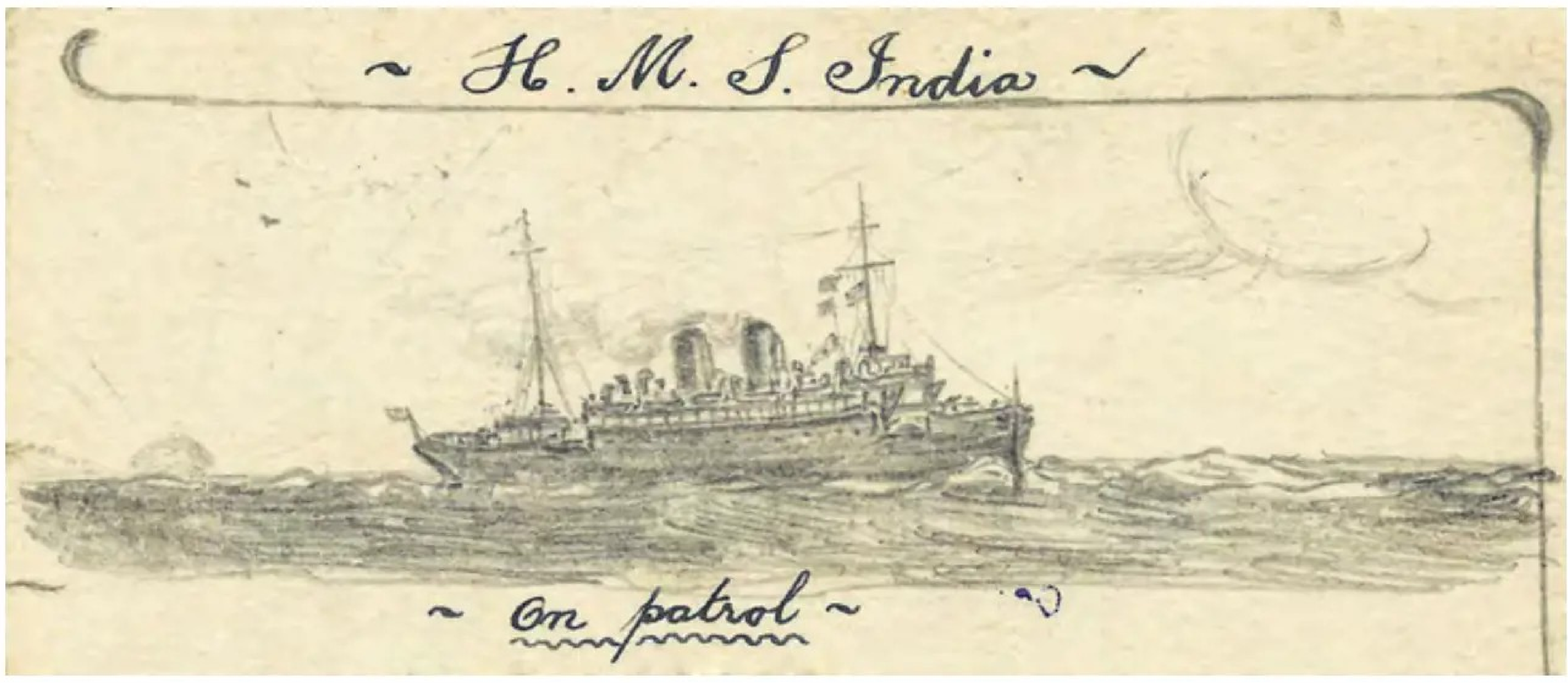
Built in 1896, SS *India* was a 500ft long, 7,900GRT steam liner operated by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, known as P&O. At her introduction, *India* was the largest ship ever built for the growing shipping conglomerate, which was yet to reach its peak, and she was followed by four sisters: *Persia*, *China*, *Egypt* and *Arabia*. Built by Caird and Co, Greenock for P&O, India was a fast, single-screw liner with accommodation for more than 300 first-class passengers, 200 second-class travellers and around 400 crew.

India spent almost 20 years sailing on mail and tourist routes prior to the outbreak of World War One. She was the first ship to use P&O's harbour facilities at Fremantle in Australia and, still in civilian service, carried Admiral Doveton Sturdee from Gibraltar to England after his victory during the 1914 Battle of the Falkland Islands. In 1915, the ship was requisitioned, alongside half of the P&O fleet, refit, and commissioned by the Royal Navy as HMS *India*.

Rapid conversion

Through history, it was common for merchant vessels to be armed or taken into war service. Around 140 of England's 200 ships mobilised to oppose to the Spanish Armada were merchant ships or conversions. Ostensibly, such vessels, properly led and handled, could be as capable as a warship of similar size. However, as dedicated warships increased exponentially in size, power and speed, by the age of steam and steel there was little

An HMS *India* cap tally


~ H. M. S. India ~
~ On patrol ~

Arnold Clarke's sketch of HMS *India* on patrol

room for merchant vessels seconded into the line of battle.

However, that did not render them useless. Merchant shipping continued to be armed and deployed in supporting roles. Britian's luxury liners, due to their size, high speed, long range, communications suite and large coal bunkers, were good candidates for armed merchant cruisers. These auxiliary vessels received a gun armament and were used to supplement the Royal Navy's cruiser force in escort/commerce protection and patrol/blockade duties. Armed merchant cruisers lacked the ballistic and torpedo protection of a large warship and were ill-suited for surface action against warships. Yet, in theory, they were unlikely to come up against anything of greater power and they had the speed and range to chase down merchant vessels or enemy commerce raiders.

Another advantage was that the conversion of existing vessels could be achieved rapidly. HMS *India* went through a refit that took around two weeks at Silley Weir's Wharf in East London. As with other liners transformed into armed merchant cruisers, she had to meet strident criteria that included boasting an average cruising speed of 10kts and endurance for 50 days at sea. All glass fittings were removed, guns and rangefinders were fitted, small arms were issued to a new ship's armoury, and a doctor's surgery and operating theatre were installed.

It is not clear what *India*'s new armament comprised, but photographs suggest she had at least eight deck guns: one bow, one aft and three each side. Converted ships of similar displacement, such as *Gloucestershire* and *Himalaya*, received up to eight 4in to 6in guns and usually two large anti-aircraft guns such as 12-pounders. Once the alterations were complete, *India* took on some 300 crew and, in April 1915, joined the war.

> *"It was common for merchant vessels to be taken into war service. However, as dedicated warships increased exponentially in size and power, by the age of steam and steel there was little room for merchant vessels in the line of battle"*

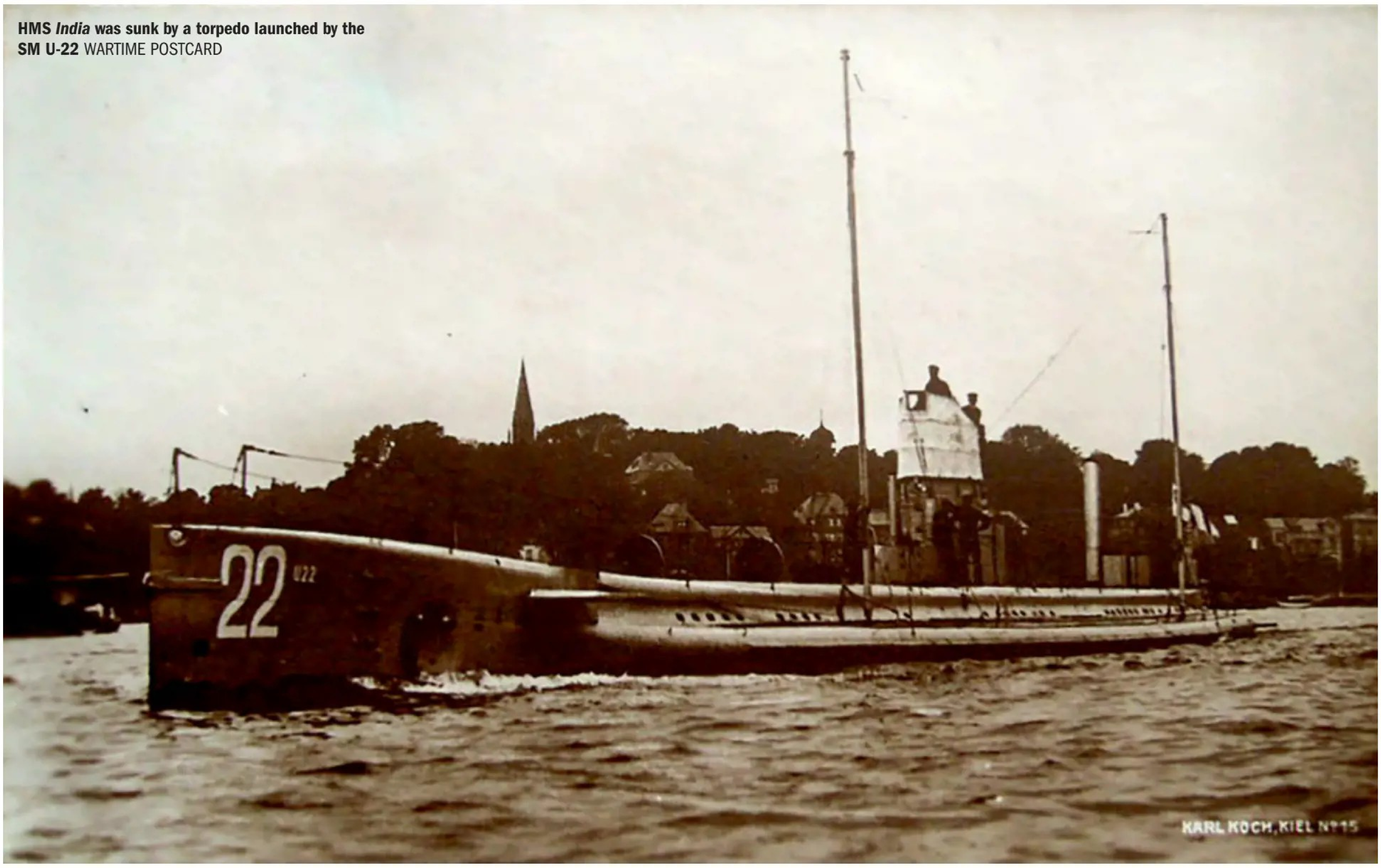
The Royal Navy's 10th Cruiser Squadron had formed at the beginning of the war under Rear-Admiral (later Admiral) Dudley de Chair, former naval aide-de-camp to King George V. The squadron's objective was to shore up the blockade of Imperial Germany by patrolling the northern reaches of the embargoed area, specifically the waters between the upper reaches of Scotland and Norway. The men crewing these ships became known as the 'Muckle Flugga Hussars' after the lighthouse and islands of the same name at the top of the Shetlands.

The blockade was ambitious, and one of the largest sea offensives in the British history. Starting from August 1914 until 1919, it had a gradual but pronounced effect on Germany's ability to wage war. The length of the English Channel and the North Sea entrances to the Atlantic were denied to German shipping, while the North Sea itself was declared a military area, mined and patrolled. Blocking forces were positioned in the Shetland-Norway gap and the Dover Strait, while distant patrols ranged into the Atlantic as far as Greenland, Iceland and west of Ireland. The Norwegian coast and the English Channel were also patrolled.

The Grand Fleet was poised at Scapa Flow for any major surface actions, while further south the Battlecruiser Force and various other formations helped keep the sea clear of German warships. Hundreds of British warships enforced the blockade, including auxiliary vessels and armed merchant cruisers, while British submarines sortied into the Baltic to sever German trade there. Only U-boats, blockade runners and a few commerce raiders were able to penetrate the maritime defences.

In the time the blockade was enforced, the 10th Cruiser Squadron boarded and intercepted some 13,000 ships, sending more than 2,000 to British ports

SS *India* was largest liner in the P&O fleet at her time of introduction



HMS *India* was sunk by a torpedo launched by the SM U-22 WARTIME POSTCARD

for examination and confiscation of contraband. The list of illegal imports, as set out by the British Government, changed regularly but included anything that could be used by Germany to aid its war effort, including rubber, iron, copper, wool and foodstuffs.

HMS *India* joined the 10th Cruiser Squadron at the beginning of May 1915. For three months, the ship, captained by Commander W Kennedy, sailed these waters. The former destroyer captain was the ship's only regular naval officer, the rest coming from the Royal Naval Reserve. The ratings in the ship's company were drawn from the Royal Fleet Reserve, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Mercantile Marine Reserve, the Royal Marines and the Coast Guard.

Suspicious Swede

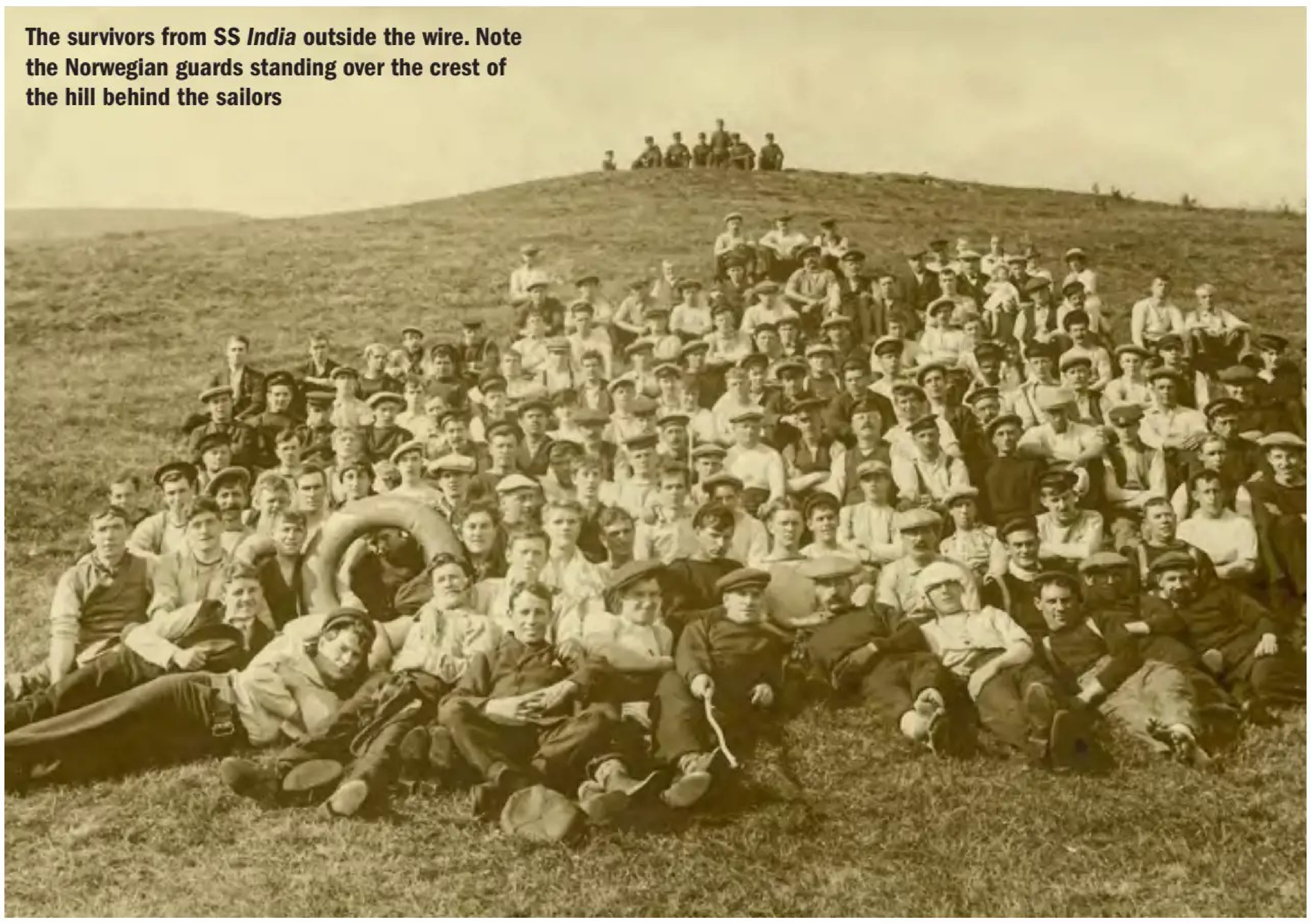
Sailing on the Northern Patrol, the ship's logbooks show her getting straight to work with the assistance of the trawler and auxiliary boats travelling alongside. Her crew boarded and inspected stopped vessels and their cargo, instructing them to report to Kirkwall for closer inspection or allowing them to carry on their journey.

However, August 7, 1915, was the last day *India* completed her watch. By dusk the next day, she had become the first P&O liner lost to enemy action and was resting at the bottom the Norwegian Sea.

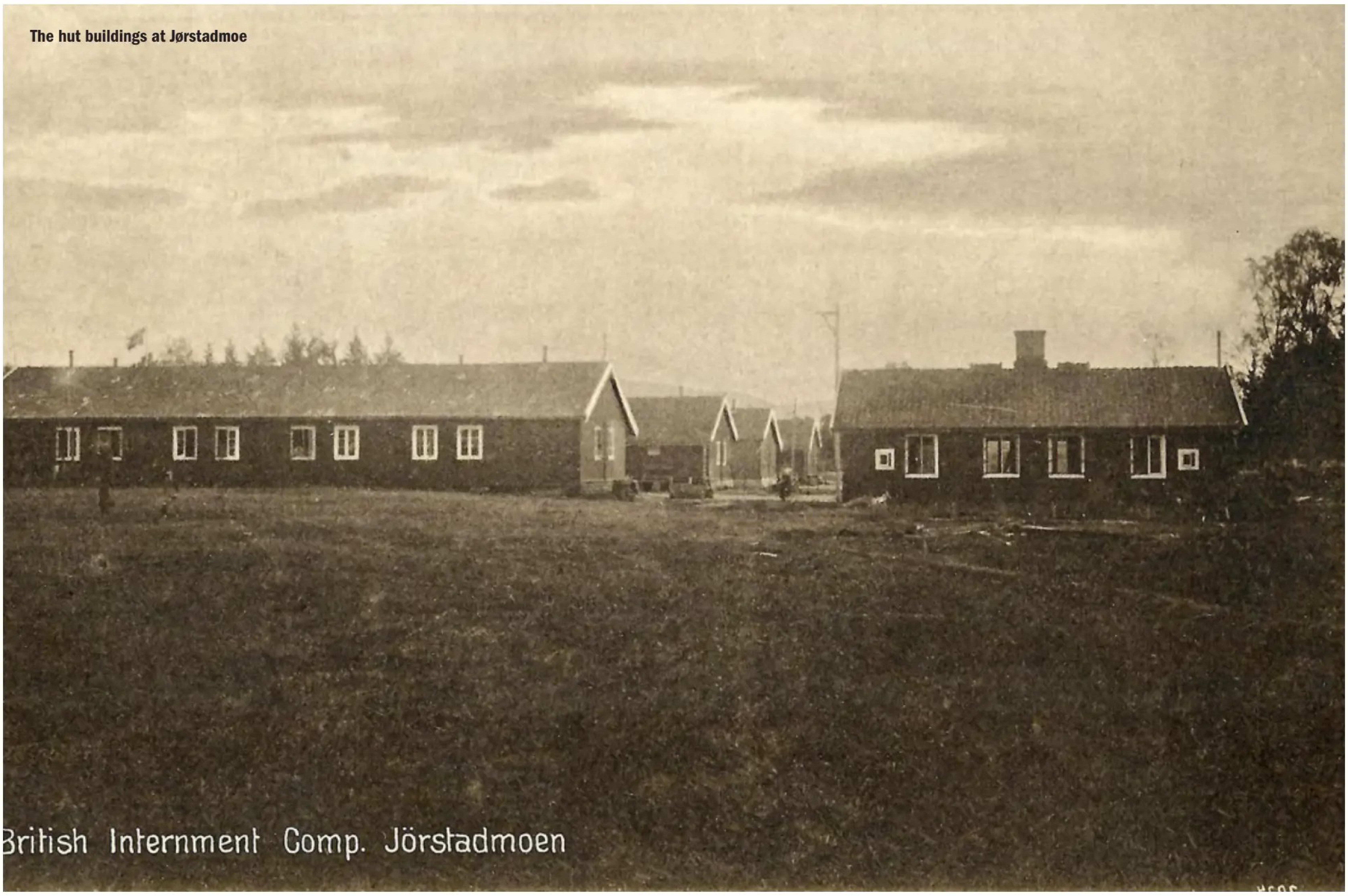
Patrolling south of the Lofoten Islands on August 8 was the SM U-22. The Germans were attempting to ship iron ore from Narvik, but their boats were continually apprehended. As a result, the Germans sent U-boats into the Norwegian Sea with the aim of lessening the impact of the blockade by sinking or forcing out the enforcing ships.

U-22's logbooks reveal the submarine had been stalking *India* for some days before they were in a position to fire a torpedo. The British were aware of the U-boat threat, so ships enforcing the blockade actively reduced the chances of being targeted with measures including random course variations, zigzagging and varying speed, all to be as unpredictable as possible.

None of this would save *India*. For those on board, August 8 began as any other, with the lookouts sighting an unfamiliar vessel and the ship moving to investigate. On that morning it was a Swedish ship, SS *Gloria*. Although a neutral vessel, she could be carrying contraband that might



The survivors from SS *India* outside the wire. Note the Norwegian guards standing over the crest of the hill behind the sailors



The hut buildings at Jørstadmoe

"U-22's logbooks reveal the submarine had been stalking India for some days before they were in a position to fire a torpedo"

end up in German hands. The *Gloria* was found, contacted and *India* pulled up nearby, launched her small boats and sent a party aboard. Nothing of concern was identified and *Gloria* was sent on its way.

Awkward position

A few hours later, the officer on duty in the radio room received message that they were to find *Gloria* and request she make her way to Kirkwall. *India* changed course to search for the Swede. They spotted a vessel, but it was within territorial waters and, after making contact, *India*'s suspicious officers changed course again to intercept. This final, predictable change of course led the cruiser into the range of U-22 and the torpedo that sunk her in under ten minutes.

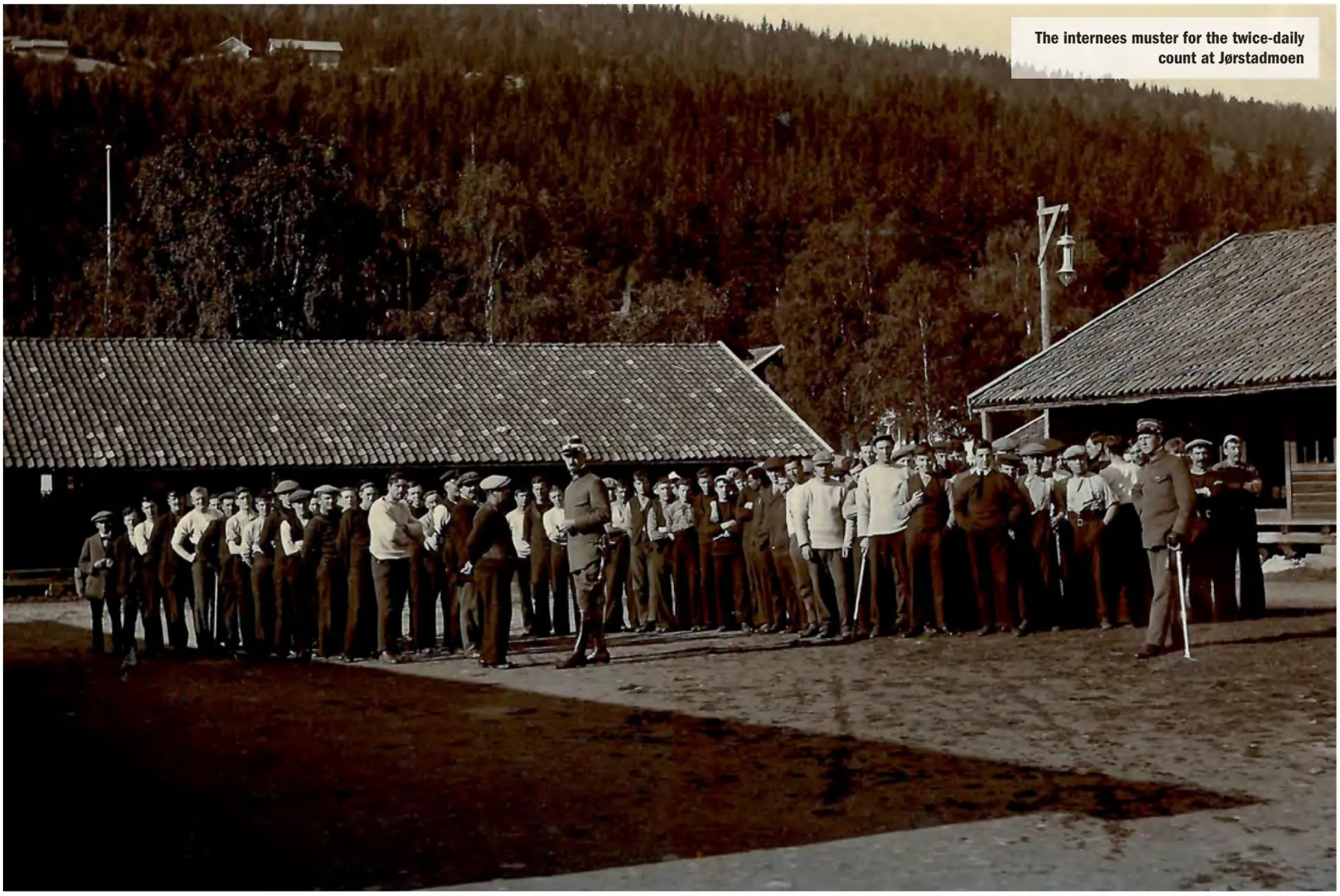
The torpedo raced towards *India*, breaching the surface twice before making contact. The impact was instantaneous and the ship began to sink. Due to the angle of her list and the speed she was sinking, just two liferafts were launched. The rest of the crew entered the water and 125 of them drowned, including 16-year-old Boy First Class Samuel Harding. The survivors had to tread water and endure the cold until rescuers arrived or brave the six miles or so to shore.

Sub-Lieutenant Ernest McKeag later wrote of his experience in the Norwegian Sea, a version of events included in Julian Thompson's 2011 *Imperial War Museum Book of the War at Sea 1914-1918*: "After jumping off the sinking boat, I went down, down, and still down, it seemed to me that I would never stop. Then, little by little, I felt the grip of the water relax and I struck out upwards." However, McKeag was sucked under two more times: "I gave up hope. Wondering how my people would receive the news I was lost." Surfacing among the flotsam and watching men lose their grip on whatever they were clinging to, McKeag saw a ship approach: "But whether I should be picked up in time or not I could not tell. I was fearfully cold and sleepy. I rested my chin on the door and knew no more. When I came to, I was in the bottom of a boat."

Those who survived had either managed to get in a whaler or lifeboat and row to the Helligvær Islands or were picked up by the Swedish steamer *Gotaland* or by the British trawler *Saxon*. The men from both ships were landed in Narvik, creating a clear but legally tricky diplomatic situation. In World War One, Norway was neutral. The landing of men from belligerent boats presented a problem for Commander Kennedy. According to the 1907 Hague Convention, Norway had the right to intern soldiers or sailors involved in the war effort should they set foot on its soil. As such, while the men rescued by the also neutral *Gotaland* could return to Britain, the men on the *Saxon* faced an uncertain future.

Kennedy was told that if the men remained on the trawler and did not step ashore, then they could return home. Yet it was not that simple. Kennedy had some 70 officers and ratings who had spent three hours afloat in the Norwegian Sea. Many were injured and/or traumatised, most had lost their clothing and all were cold. The British trawler simply could not accommodate that many stricken sailors and had not the food, clothing, blankets and medical supplies to care for them on a journey to Scotland. The difficult decision was made and the survivors left *Saxon* not knowing when they would see their homes again.

After seeing off those rescued by *Gotaland* and attending the funeral of the 13 of the deceased sailors in Narvik, the interned crew was moved to a temporary camp between Narvik and Bodo, where they were reunited with the survivors



The internees muster for the twice-daily count at Jørstadmoen

who had rowed to safety. After being held at the camp for less than a week, they found themselves on another vessel sailing about 400 miles south as the crow flies to Trondheim, where they boarded a train to Kristiania and another to Lillehammer. They then marched four miles to Jørstadmoen, where there was an existing Norwegian army camp.

This was to be their home for the rest of the war. Richard A Clarke (known as Arnold) is the grandfather-in-law of the author of this feature and his letters provide with a personal account of the camp and the time the men spent there. In the early letters, he comments on the fair weather, a football match where the internees were beaten by the local team from Gövick and how the local people had been coming to look at the town's relucant new residents.

Generally, the men were treated well and afforded a level of freedom whereby they could visit Lillehammer, swim in summer, ski in winter or go walking, but at all times accompanied by armed guards. They were required to muster each morning and evening, and the men shared huts in groups of eight, sleeping on straw mattresses and warmed by a single fire. However, it only took a few months before some prisoners to tire of their situation. The visits to Lillehammer led to drunken returns to camp, where some of the men picked fights with the guards. Others attempted to escape, with troublemakers removed and imprisoned.

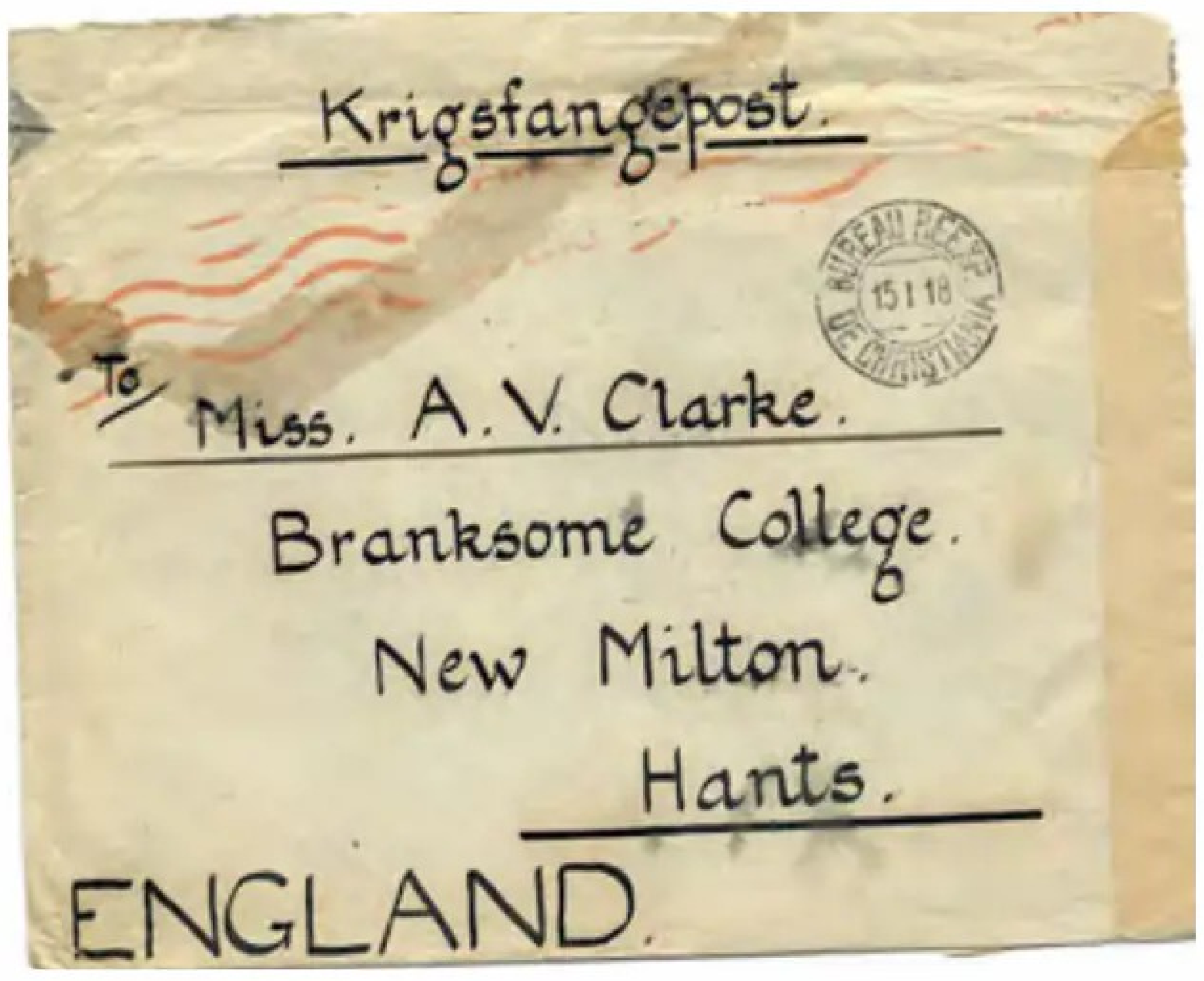
Meanwhile, *India*'s officers were separated and not required to live in the camp. Most found accommodation at a guest house in Lillehammer, although each returned to the main camp and stayed with the men for two-week periods on rotation. Commander Kennedy found himself a rather grand house. He even married a Norwegian woman in 1916 – it is thought they had known each other pre-war – and lived out the rest of the war in relative comfort.

Not only were officers permitted to live outside the camp, they were allowed to have their stewards with them, at least in daytime. Kennedy arranged for Able Seaman John Grigson to be granted freedom from the camp to work as his private secretary. This required Grigson to wear a band around his arm denoting his special status. He also had to sign a pledge to behave with honour and not abuse his status. This worked well until June 1916, when Grigson and Charles Clinton produced an escape plan. One man would use the armband to leave the camp, they would then post the device back to the other, who would use it to leave as well. The story goes that they then stole bicycles to get as far from Jørstadmoen as possible. Unfortunately, the details of the clever break have been lost, but the pair eventually returned home, Clinton to Scotland and Grigson to England. This successful escape spread excitement throughout the camp.

Grafters and grumblers

By the second anniversary of *India*'s sinking and the internment of the crew, it was clear the situation was becoming harder to bear. It was the time when Arnold wrote home the least and admitted that "news is forced". His written chatter chiefly focuses on the weather as little else was going on.

That is until his hut, Number 7, burned down. He wrote: "The fire broke the monotony a bit. We are having a

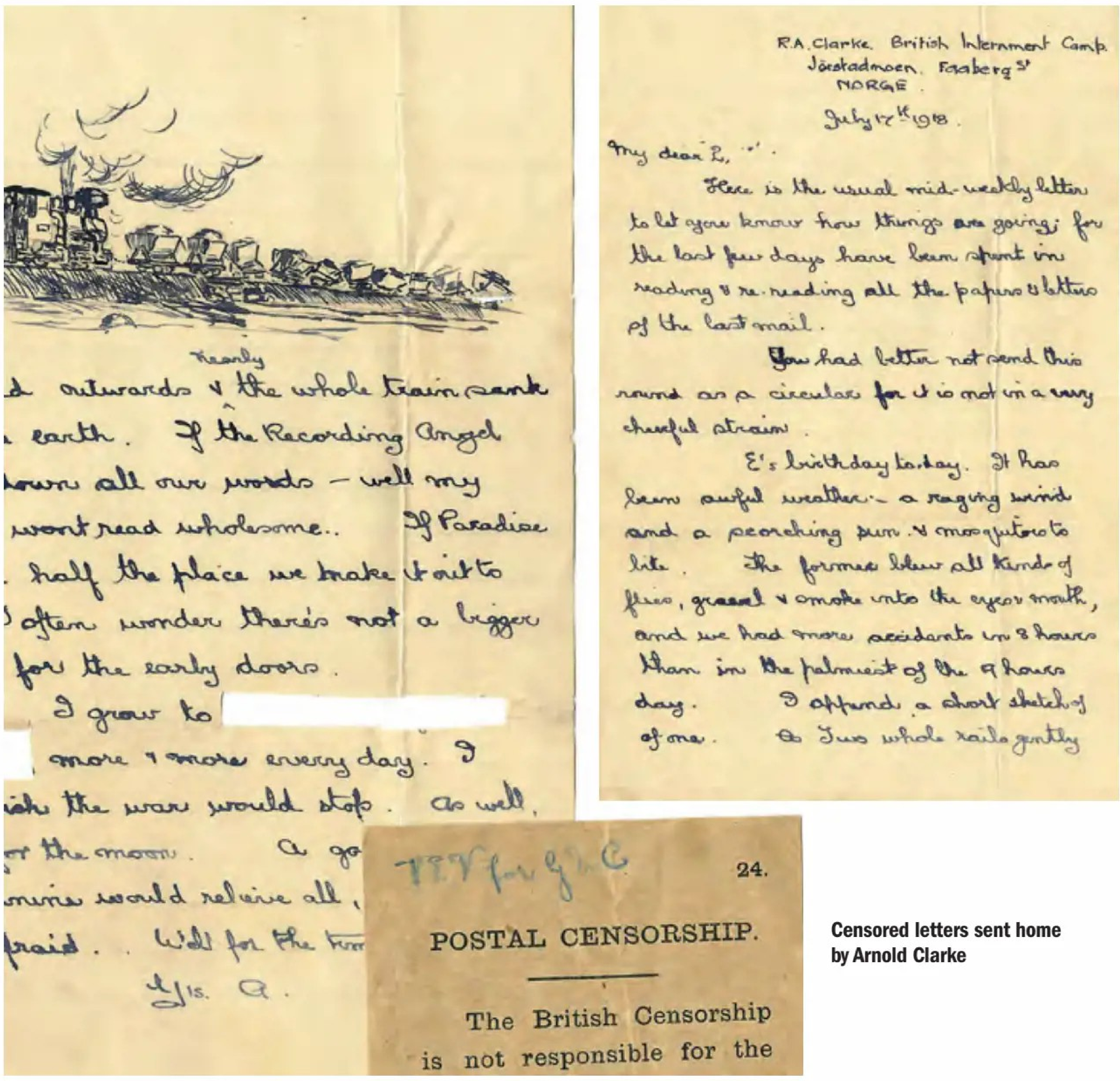


Krigsfangepost.

15 I 18

To Miss. A.V. Clarke.
Branksome College.
New Milton.
Hants.
ENGLAND.

A letter sent by Arnold Clarke to his sister at home, with Norwegian postmarks



nearly
d outwards & the whole train sank
earth. If the Recording Angel
own all our words – well my
wont read wholesome.. If Paradise
half the place we make it out to
often wonder there's not a bigger
for the early doors.
I grow to [redacted]
more & more every day. I
ish the war would stop. As well
r the moon. A go
mine would relieve all,
fraid. Well for the ti
Yrs. A.

R.A. Clarke. British Internment Camp.
Jörstadmoen. Faaberg St
NORGE.
July 17th 1918.

My dear R, "'.

Here is the usual mid-weekly letter to let you know how things are going; for the last few days have been spent in reading & re-reading all the papers & letters of the last mail.

You had better not send this round as a circular for it is not in a very cheerful strain.

E's birthday today. It has been awful weather – a raging wind and a scorching sun & mosquitoes to bite. The former blew all kinds of flies, gravel & smoke into the eyes & mouth, and we had more accidents in 8 hours than in the palmiest of the 9 hours day. I append a short sketch of one. Two whole rails gently

24.

POSTAL CENSORSHIP.

The British Censorship is not responsible for the

Censored letters sent home by Arnold Clarke

"Vehement complaints were made by internees about the quality of the victuals in camp"

housewarming at present. An interned housewarming means that you have pulled all the salvage out of various sacks and boxes and separated the socks out of the frying pans and cleared trousers from a mixture of tooth powder, soda and sugar – but man is only born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards – and no life was lost." While Arnold made light of the situation, it was added trauma for the men to lose all their possessions again. They had limited belongings, but what they did have, such as letters and photographs from loved ones, they treasured. It was not the last time they lost everything, either, as another fire consumed their cabin before the war's end.

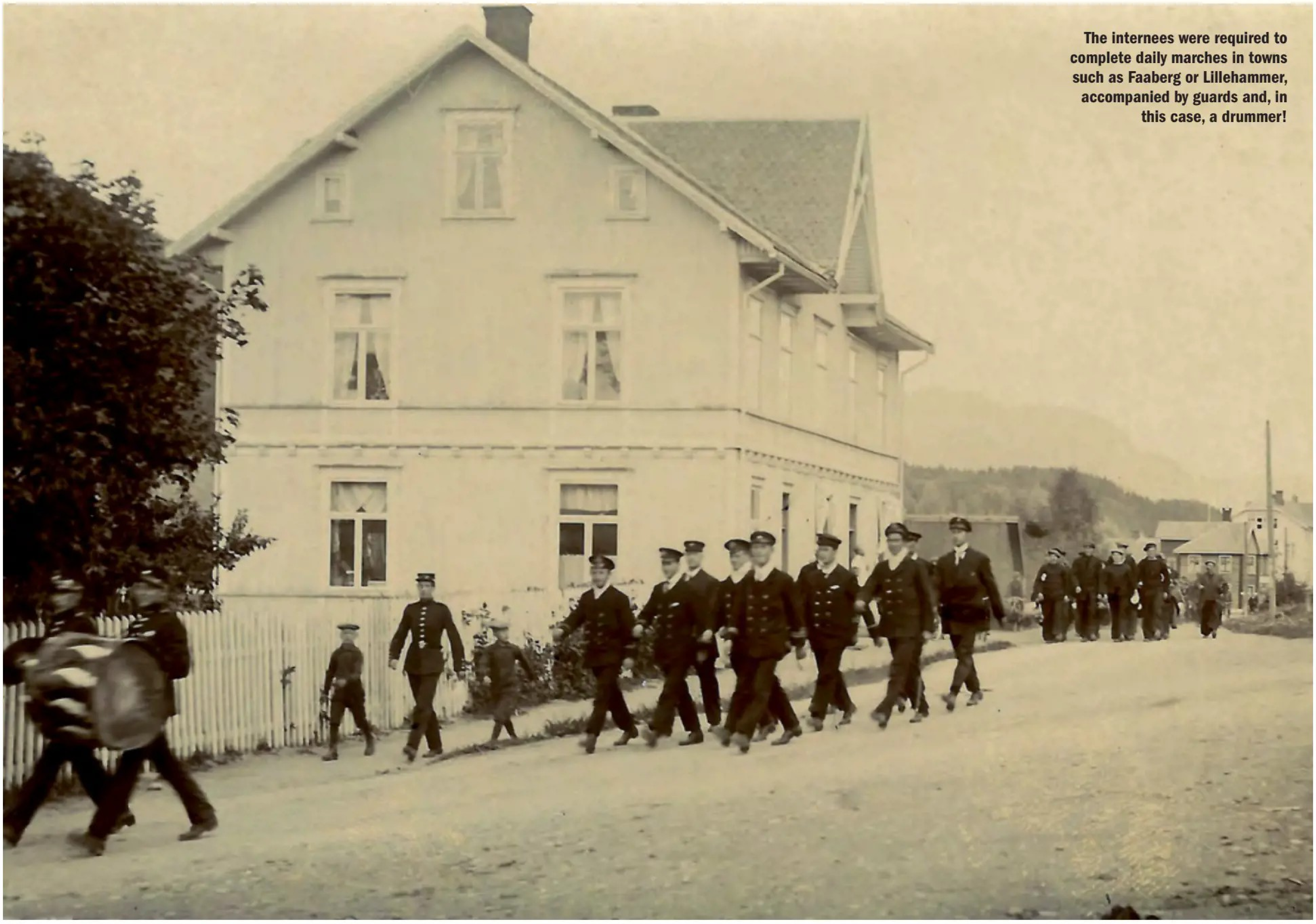
In 1917, vehement complaints were made by internees about the quality of the victuals in camp, so much so that Sir Henry Yarde-Buller, military attaché to Christiania and Stockholm, mounted an inspection. He agreed with the complainants that the milk was undrinkable, but felt that most of the grievances came from habitual groaners and the officers on duty agreed with him. While the men may well have been grumblers, it would seem that overriding boredom was the impetus for feelings of dissatisfaction. Some relief came with sports days and the occasional theatre revue. They even hosted dances, to which locals were invited and romances blossomed more than once. However, what they really relished were opportunities for more extended breaks from camp. These arrived in two ways, the first being work details. In 1916, some of the internees were offered work on the construction of the Dovrebanen railway between Oslo and Trondheim.

Arnold jumped at the chance and spent three months in Hjerkinn with several internees, a Norwegian officer and 12 guards. He wrote to his sister: "The food in this place is A1. Tea is always drunk without milk and the coffee is topping." In 1918, Arnold joined another a team sent to Oppdal for further work on the same line, which is where they saw out another anniversary of their ship's sinking. Arnold commented to his sister: "Soon the third anniversary will be round. Oh Lord, how much longer?"

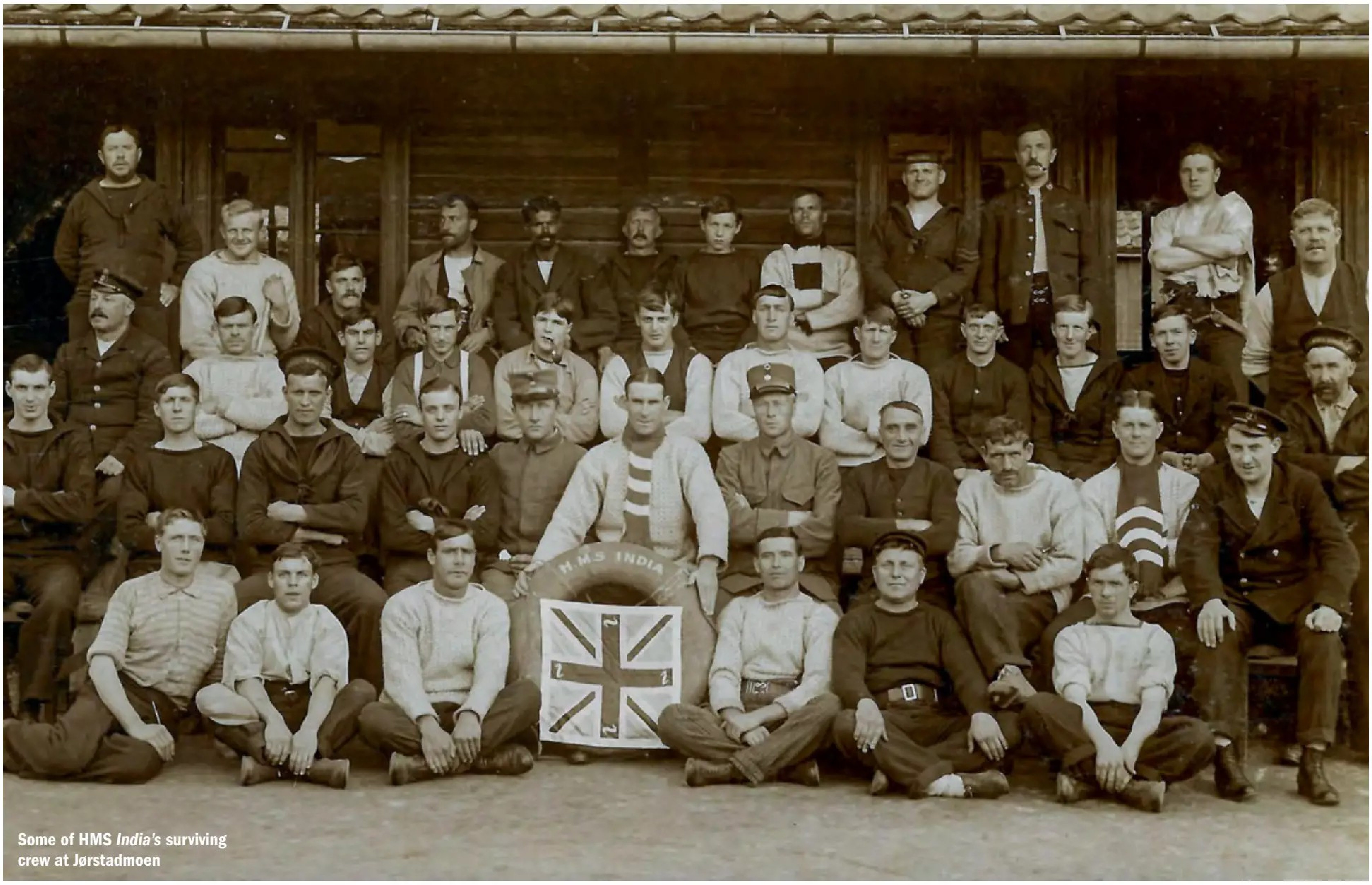
While work offered a distraction, it could also be dangerous. In July 1918, when Arnold worked as an engine driver, he wrote of an accident: "Early this morning I was shunting the first train full of trucks down to the tip when a coupling broke and four wagons rushed down the incline. One could only watch events. Poetry best describes it – 'and like a horse unbroken, when first it feels the reigns, the furious wagons struggled hard and tossed their tawny manes, and burst the curb and bounded, rejoicing to be free and whirling down in fierce career – rushed headlong.'"

So, there was relief from Jørstadmoen camp through work details, but while the tasks were interesting, the internees continued to struggle with isolation and loneliness. In one letter home, Arnold wrote that "I am in no wise over brimming with cheerfulness", also including a reference to the "Spanish

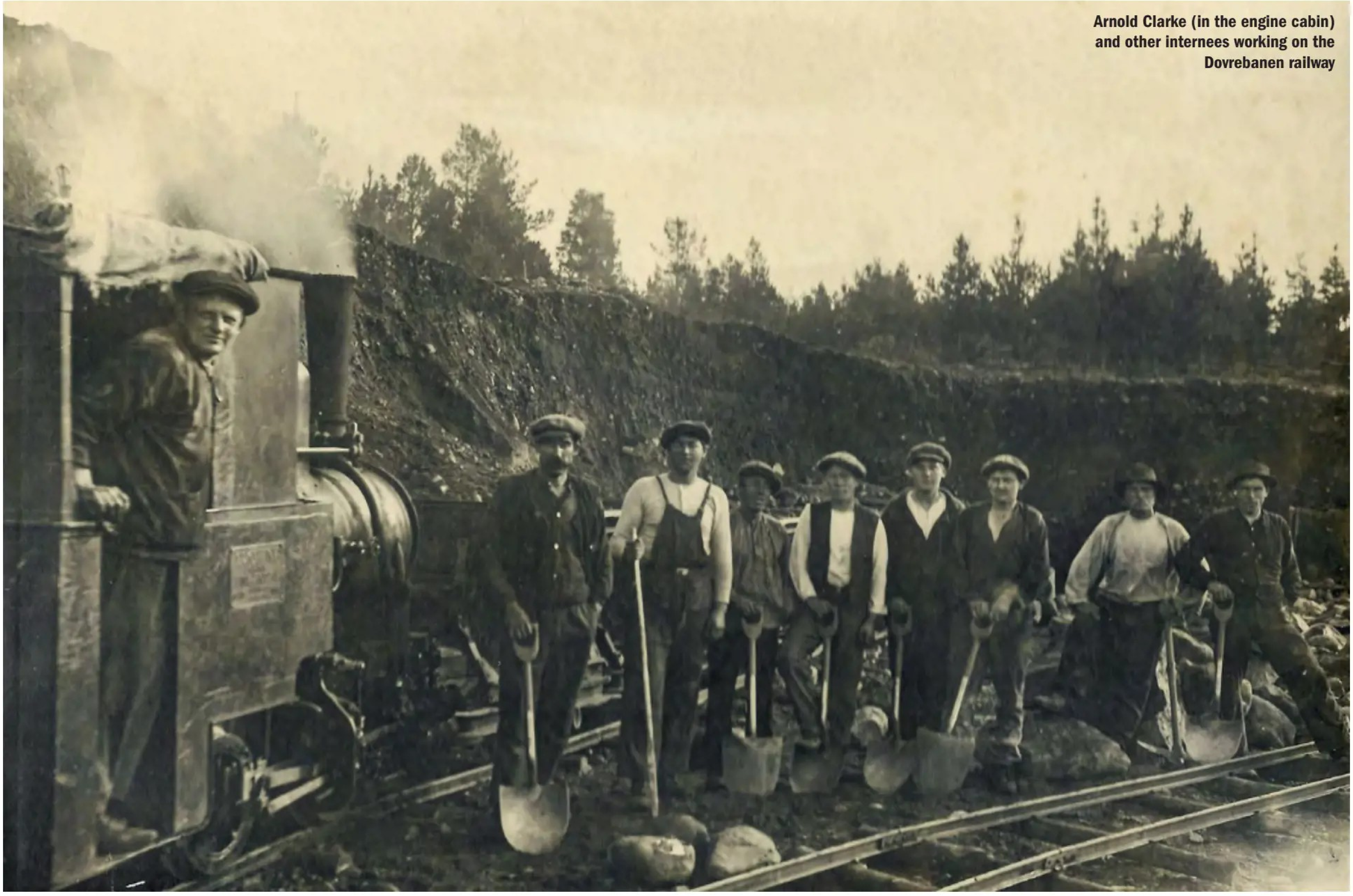
Norwegian guards at Jørstadmoen



The internees were required to complete daily marches in towns such as Faaberg or Lillehammer, accompanied by guards and, in this case, a drummer!



Some of HMS *India's* surviving crew at Jørstadmoen



Arnold Clarke (in the engine cabin) and other internees working on the Dovrebanen railway

sykdom" spreading through the camp, likely a reference to influenza.

The Jørstadmoen blues

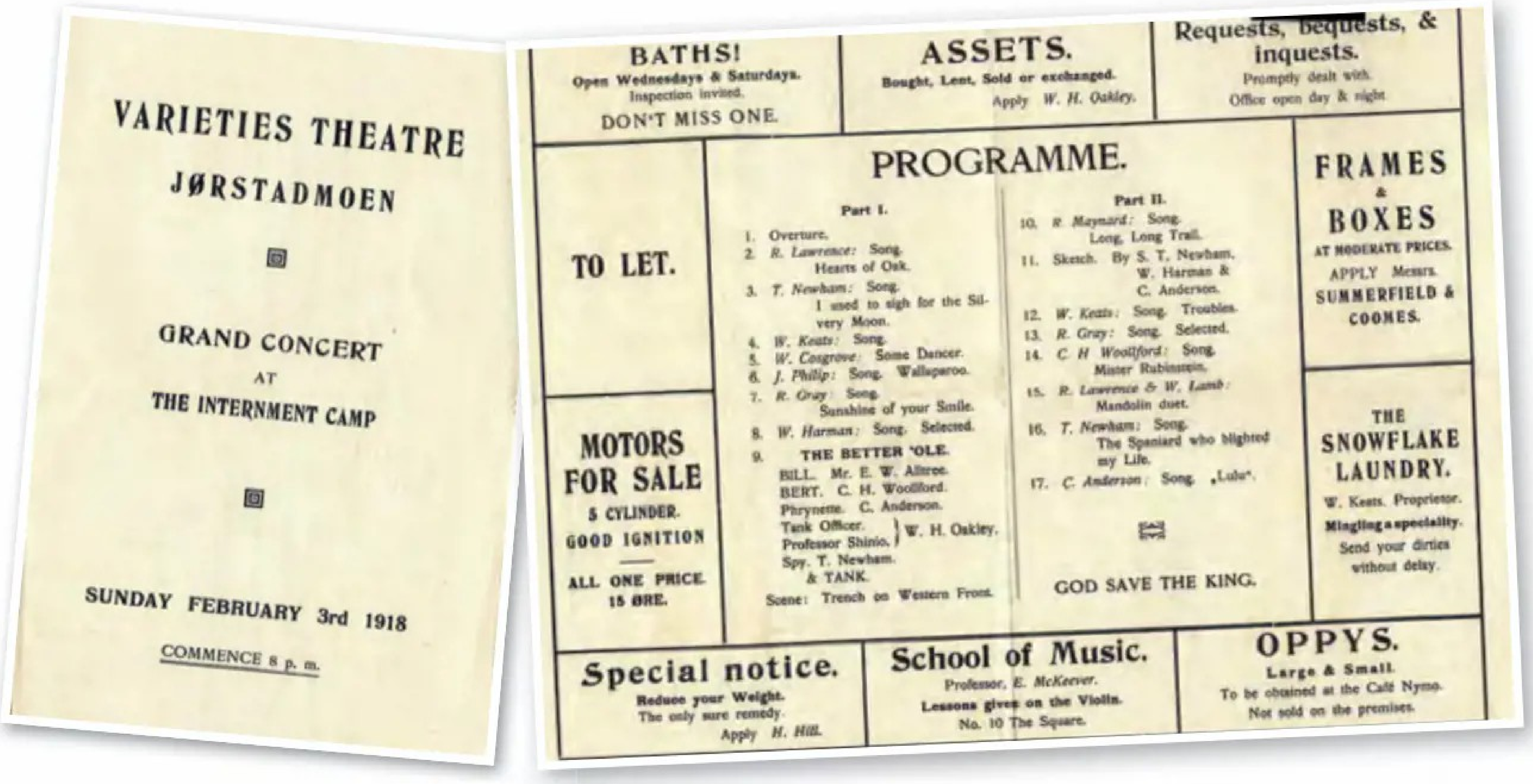
The second avenue of escape was so remarkable that it bordered on the surreal: all the internees, as serving men, were offered the opportunity to go home on leave. It seems almost unbelievable that quasi-POWs were permitted to take leave, but the Norwegian Government came to an agreement with the British and, from late 1916, groups were permitted to return home after signing a promise that they would refrain from being involved in the war and would return to camp when their time (usually around two weeks) was up.

Arnold was granted leave in November 1917, returning home to see his brother, who had served on the front and moved into munitions work, as well as his father and sisters. However, some internees pushed the boundaries, so the Norwegians became stricter, insisting the men return on time. One of the crew, Australian trimmer William Oakley, was granted leave in June 1918 and signed the declaration swearing he would not "attempt to escape, neither will I make any arrangements for escaping nor assist anyone else to do so in any way whatsoever." It did not take him long to break this promise. He wrote to his interned mate, Frederick Haddow, on June 26, stating: "I joined up to fight, not to be interned, so I met a pal and him and I suggested a change of places. He belongs to the Australian forces so I am to get his uniform, and he has got mine and he shall go to Norway soon and I shall go to France next week. I mean to have a go at the big stuff yet!"

Norwegian archives confirm that one Private Albert Ronke did turn up at Jørstadmoen. However, the guards were not easily fooled and, at Ronke's first muster, his cover was blown. He was sent to prison and back to his unit, where he underwent a court martial. Oakley's fate is yet to be ascertained, although he does not appear to have been sent back to Norway.

Over 39 months of internment, many stories have emerged from those held in Norway against their will. While the men were safely interned in a neutral country, thanks to our modern experience of COVID-19 it is perhaps easier to empathise

> *"The guards were not easily fooled and, at Albert Ronke's first muster, his cover was blown"*



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PROGRAMME.

Part I.

1. Overture.
2. *R. Lawrence:* Song. Hearts of Oak.
3. *T. Newham:* Song. I used to sigh for the Silvery Moon.
4. *W. Keats:* Song.
5. *W. Cosgrove:* Some Dancer.
6. *J. Philip:* Song. Wallaparoo.
7. *R. Gray:* Song. Sunshine of your Smile.
8. *W. Harman:* Song. Selected.
9. THE BETTER 'OLE.
   BILL. Mr. E. W. Altree.
   BERT. C. H. Woolford.
   Phrynette. C. Anderson.
   Tank Officer. } W. H. Oakley.
   Professor Shinio. }
   Spy. T. Newham.
   & TANK.
   Scene: Trench on Western Front.

Part II.

10. *R. Maynard:* Song. Long, Long Trail.
11. Sketch. By S. T. Newham, W. Harman & C. Anderson.
12. *W. Keats:* Song. Troubles.
13. *R. Gray:* Song. Selected.
14. *C. H. Woolford:* Song. Mister Rubinstein.
15. *R. Lawrence & W. Lamb:* Mandolin duet.
16. *T. Newham:* Song. The Spaniard who blighted my Life.
17. *C. Anderson:* Song. „Lulu".

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A programme from a concert held at Jørstadmoen in February 1918

EXTRAORDINARY ESCAPEE

One of the Jørstadmoen escapees enjoyed a successful career and became highly decorated.

John Grigson was born in 1893 in Cornwall. After surviving the sinking of HMS *India* and his successful escape, he retrained as a pilot and joined the Royal Naval Air Service. For reasons unknown, he was not forced to return to the camp and was allowed to rejoin the war, which went against the agreement made by the British and Norwegians. His internment is mentioned in literature but his escape is not, even his family know little about it.

He joined the seaplane carrier HMS *Ark Royal* in August 1917 and, after the formation of the RAF in April 1918, was promoted to temporary captain and later appointed to lead 533 Flight, 221 Squadron, flying anti-submarine sorties in the Aegean. Grigson and his observer, Captain Oswald Gayford, were awarded the DFC for their actions on September 21, 1918. Their citation read: "These officers have flown together for a period of 12 months, during which time they participated in a number of bombing raids, carried out a large number of valuable reconnaissance patrols and escort flights in all weathers, by day and night, during the performance of which duties they have brought down hostile aircraft on several occasions. No task is too difficult for these officers."

In 1919, he twice served in Russia, supporting Tsarist forces. He received the Bar to his DFC in December 1919, was Mentioned in Despatches and led a squadron in Egypt before supporting British forces in Constantinople and the Dardanelles. In July 1920, he received the DSO and, in October 1921, a second Bar to his DFC.

In 1940, he was made a temporary air commodore and became the AOC in Palestine and Trans-Jordan. He then held command positions in Greece and Crete, before being reassigned as the senior staff officer to the Rhodesian Air Training Group, that nation's contribution to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. However, in July 1943, Grigson was killed when his Harvard Mk.IIa, serial EX163, crashed near Bulawayo. He was 50 years old.

with their predicament, being denied their purpose and freedom and separated from family and friends for a prolonged period of time. Swiss physician Dr Adolf Vischer coined the term 'Barbed Wire Disease' in 1918 after witnessing POWs and noted that long-term incarceration and confinement could lead to psychosis or depression. It does seem that the condition could be applied to some of the men at Jørstadmoen. Some had mental issues or became depressed, others were seriously injured and sent home early, while more fell ill and were repatriated.

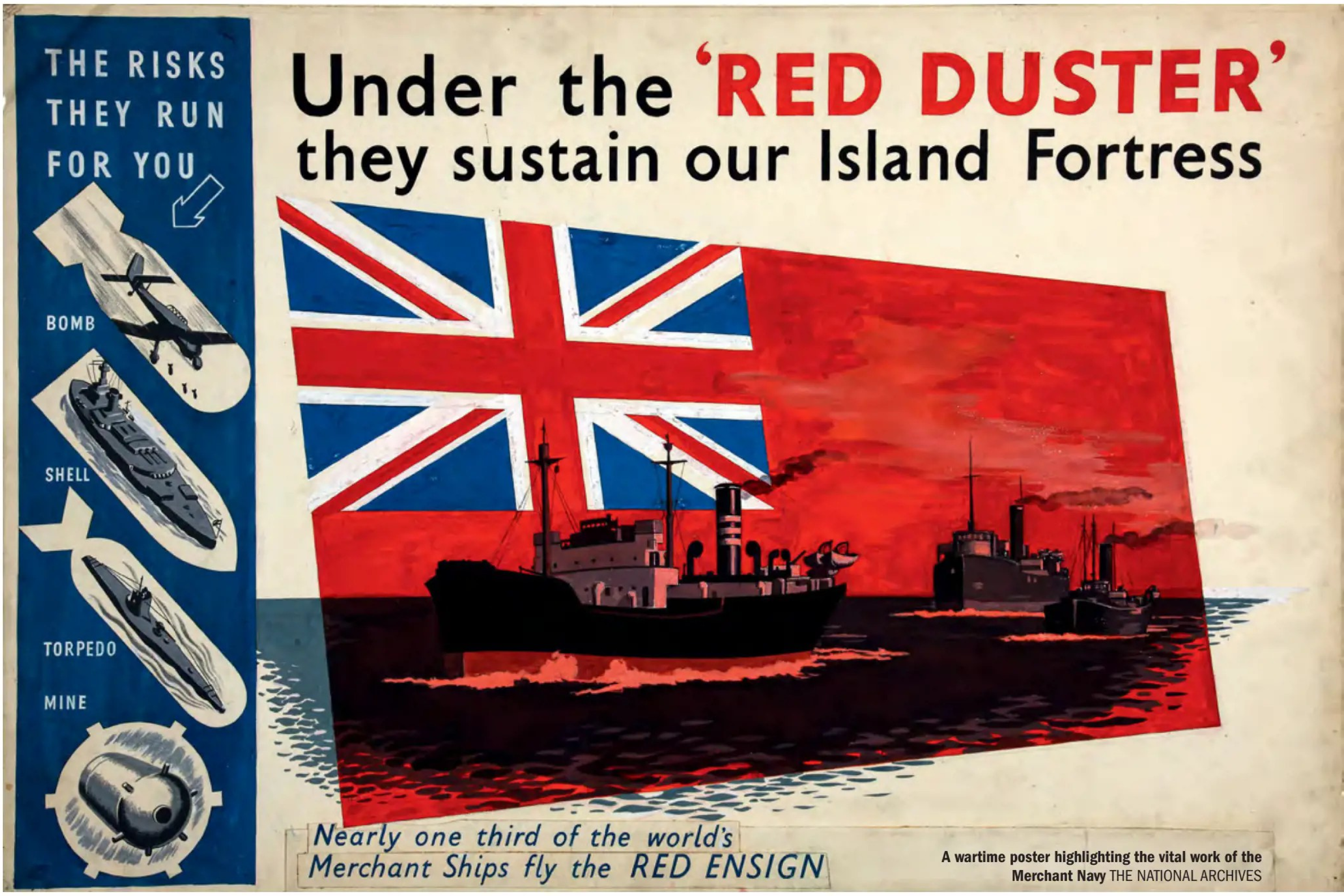
For those who remained, a few found love and forged a lifelong connection with Norway. Fireman William Tilley met one of the camp cooks, Agnethe Haugen. They married in October 1918 and though he intended on taking his bride back to London, they settled in Lillehammer and had six children. Tilley wanted to aid Norway during World War Two, but instead went to Britain to keep his family safe. He survived an aircraft crash before being allowed to return to Norway, where he lived with his family until his death in 1976.

It has proven easy to dismiss the experiences of those interned in Norway and their stories have been forgotten. These were men who had signed up to fight like many of their comrades, but experienced the distress of watching so many of their mates drown. That was a trauma that many of the survivors never spoke about. It is time to validate their experiences. BW

Rebecca Clarke is the author the 2022-published A Bare Chronicle of Existence – Stories and Letters from Internment in Norway During WW1, available direct from the publisher, online and in all good bookshops.

Austin Macauley Publishers | 978-1-39845-646-4 |Paperback & eBook | £11.99 (£3.50 eBook)

Sports and other distractions helped alleviate boredom in the camp


THE RISKS THEY RUN FOR YOU
Under the 'RED DUSTER' they sustain our Island Fortress
BOMB
SHELL
TORPEDO
MINE
Nearly one third of the world's Merchant Ships fly the RED ENSIGN

A wartime poster highlighting the vital work of the Merchant Navy THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BRAVERY UNDER THE RED DUSTER

The Merchant Navy, Britain's 'fourth service', was critical to the nation's survival and pitted civilians against hidden enemies and the awesome power of the sea. John Ash unpicks the numbers behind the war-winning contribution of these volunteers

185,000 MEN (AND WOMEN) AT SEA

In 1939, Britain's Merchant Navy was the largest in the world, comprising at least one third of the world's merchant ships.

Britain, an island nation with huge overseas commitments, was reliant on sea trade. Its merchant fleet would import and export food, equipment and materials, and carry the men, machines and supplies to deploy and sustain armies in far-flung theatres. Crewing those vessels were 185,000-200,000 civilian sailors, all volunteers and of whom some 40,000 hailed from India, China or Hong Kong. They served in all theatres, sailing for each and every minute of the war. Although their average age was in the mid-30s, merchant sailors could be as young as 14 or as old as 80, and women also sailed the seven seas as stewards, nurses, in hospitality or as radio officers.

The Merchant Navy was placed under the control of the Ministry of Shipping (later the Ministry of War Transport) which assigned cargoes and destinations. The crews required by merchant vessels varied considerably, with the larger liners requiring several hundred crew, and small colliers perhaps requiring just eight men. Sailors and reserve sailors were either taken on by ships long term, or selected ships by 'signing on.' Offices in major British ports and in Montreal and New York helped pair sailors with ships needing crews.

HIT JUST 9 HOURS INTO THE WAR

None of the Allied services was in action for longer than the Merchant Navy, and it took its first casualties on September 3, 1939, when the war was just nine hours old.

That day, the liner SS *Athenia* was sailing from Belfast to Montreal with 1,418 passengers on board, including children and 316 American and 469 Canadian citizens. She was 250 miles west of Donegal when she was torpedoed without warning by the U-30 at 1940hrs. Several ships, including two British destroyers and an American steamship, rescued 981 survivors, but 83 people were killed. The 18 crewmembers that perished were the first Merchant Navy casualties of the conflict.

By January 1, 1940, almost a million tonnes of shipping had already been sunk. The last British merchant ship lost was the SS *Avondale Park*, sunk by torpedo on May 7, 1945, killing 23.

Survivors from *Athenia* being recovered by the SS *City of Flint* OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

100% OF SHIPS PACKING A PUNCH

A naval gun is lowered into position astern on board a British merchant ship CORBIS/GETTY

Britain armed its merchant ships in wartime and the original specifications for DEMS vessels (Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships) called for an armament equivalent to a BL 4in Mk.VII gun for anti-submarine use and a heavy anti-aircraft gun such as a QF 12-pounder, supplemented by machine guns. The British armed 3,400 merchant ships by January 1941 and all ships were armed by 1943.

As the war progressed, Oerlikon and Bofors cannon replaced the machine guns. However, ships required a substantial refit to install guns and their mountings, magazines and accommodation for the DEMS gun crews. About 24,000 DEMS gunners were Royal Navy sailors but thousands more came from the Royal Artillery Maritime Regiment and 150,000 Merchant Navy sailors were trained to take over the guns if needed. DEMS vessels remained with the Merchant Navy.

More powerful armed merchant cruisers came from a separate programme but were still little match for a serious combatant. Thus converted, these ships were operated as Royal Navy vessels with naval crews or by some of the 10,000 Naval Auxiliaries – merchant seamen who made themselves eligible for a service period in navy uniform. Aside from strengthening needed to install the guns, merchant ships featured no real protection. Nevertheless, that did not prevent some gallant last stands such as that of HMS *Jervis Bay* versus the *Scheer* in November 1940, or HMS *Rawalpindi* versus *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* in November 1939.

450 CONVOY SERIES AND 200+ ROUTES

Technology and tactics changed to thwart the U-boats and mass-produced escorts, intelligence breakthroughs and better air power provision helped turn the tide. The pace of progress could be rapid: when U-boats started using acoustic-homing torpedoes, the Canadians developed a countermeasure in 17 days.

The most effective measure was the convoy system, revived from World War One. By grouping shipping into columns and forming those columns into a convoy, the U-boats would be less able to find targets in the vast Atlantic while the merchantmen would be easier to protect. Merchant shipping was placed under Admiralty control in late August 1939, and the first convoy sailed on September 2.

Typically, 60 or so ships would be assembled where they would be protected by a close escort usually comprising six destroyers or corvettes. Merchant ships were positioned about 1,000 yards apart with those carrying the most hazardous cargoes in the centre. A convoy commodore, usually a former naval officer, ensured co-ordination with the escort group.

Shortages of escort vessels first limited the protection offered, but as the war progressed mass-produced corvettes and the inclusion of Fighter Catapult Ships or CAM ships in convoys, which carried single-use, rocket-assisted Hurricanes to ward off patrol aircraft, strengthened defences. Later, MAC ships – larger merchant ships with flight decks – and escort carriers were able to operate and recover fighters and anti-submarine aircraft. Heavy escort groups including battleships would stand-off poised to respond to surface threats, while dedicated escort/support groups would be attached to various convoys when needed.

Running convoys was a scientific process, with routes, size, escort strength and frequency tweaked in correspondence to threat, intelligence and availability. All convoys were classified by their speed and destination with more than 450 'convoy series' (PQ, JW, OB, OG etc) run across more than 200 routes to every conceivable major port destination. The first convoy series was 'FS' (Forth to Southend), with FS1 sailing in September 1939.

The prefixes 'H' and 'O' stood for 'Homebound' and 'Outbound' respectively, while 'HX' indicated fast convoys moving munitions, oil or other explosive cargo. Convoys from Britain to Murmansk were 'JM', and those that sailed there from Canada, Newfoundland and Iceland were 'PQ'. Once assigned its two-letter code, convoys were numbered sequentially. Other code letters denoted extra or secondary destinations or traits such as 'F' for fast (9kts+) and 'S' for slow (7kts).

Convoy battles were common, and the U-boats attacked roughly half the routes. The July 1942 Convoy PQ 17 suffered the worst losses; ordered to scatter because of reports that the battleship *Tirpitz* had sortied, just 11 of its 35 ships arrived in Russia. The largest mercantile convoy was HX 300, which left Halifax for Liverpool in July 1944 comprising more than 160 merchant vessels and more than 30 escorts.

THE 'GREY GHOST'S' 16,082 MEN

Vessels capable 13kts or more were sometimes permitted to sail independently, but the losses among them were significantly greater. Nevertheless, some of the world's largest, fastest, ships sailed solo.

Ocean liners were used as troopships or to move POWs. Due to their size, it was difficult to outfit them for martial purposes. Fixtures and fittings were ripped out and stored, defensive armaments fitted, and the ships painted grey. RMS *Queen Mary* – the 'Grey Ghost' – received a 6in gun as well as 20mm and 40mm cannon and a degaussing coil. Six miles of carpet were removed, the woodwork covered, and masses of bunks installed.

A liner's speed meant that it was unlikely to fall victim to U-boat attack, so they could proceed at 23kts+ and forgo an escort. Millions of troops were ferried millions of miles by liners, and in addition to RMS *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary*, notable liners taken up from trade included RMS *Aquitania* (the only major liner to serve in both wars), RMS *Mauretania*, RMS *Empress of Britain* (the biggest liner lost, and the largest ship sunk by a U-boat), and SS *Île de France*.

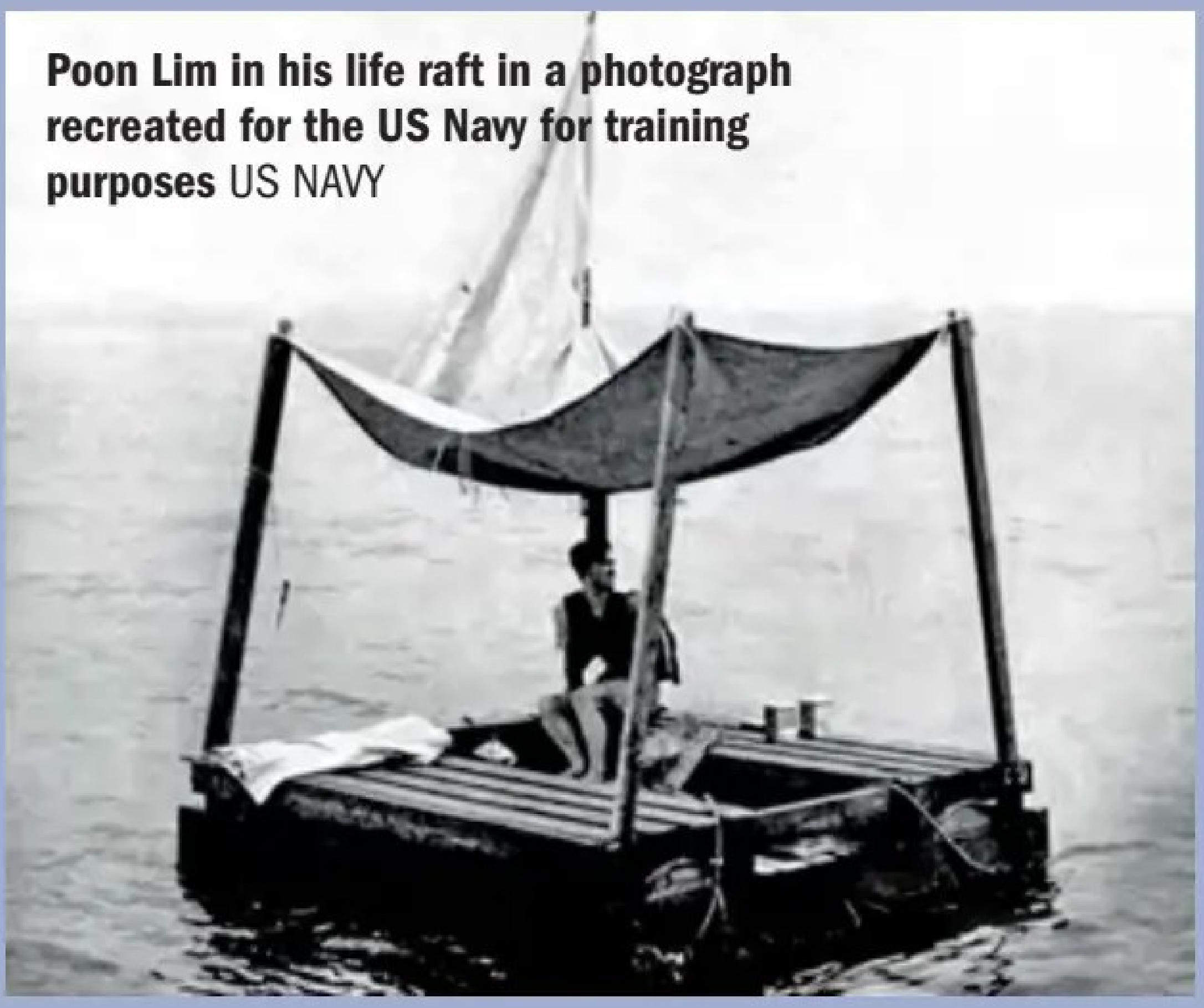
***Queen Mary* repatriates thousands of US troops to New York, June 1945** NARA

Capable of more than 30kts, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary* were the largest, fastest troopships available. In July 1943, *Queen Mary* carried 16,082 US soldiers to Britain, a record for the most passengers transported by one vessel on a single voyage. She alone moved more 800,000 troops over 600,000 miles while *Queen Elizabeth* ferried 750,000 troops, 500,000 miles.

135 DAYS STRANDED

By September 1945, 4,700 British-flagged ships had been lost to enemy action – 2,232, some 13,000,000 tons, in the Atlantic alone. The losses were particularly hard on Liverpool, the city's ship owners losing 3,000,000 tons – equal to merchant fleet losses of Norway and Greece combined, and a quarter of all British losses.

Convoy rescue ships and escorts would pick up survivors if they could, but this was not always possible, leaving many to perish in hostile waters. In rough seas or in winter, death could be rapid. However, there are several instances of incredible survival and endurance, the most famous being Poon Lim. A Chinese steward serving on the British ship SS *Benlomond*, he entered the water on November 23, 1942, after the ship was torpedoed. He reached a life raft and survived on its rations before resorting to fishing with a makeshift line. Picked up by Brazilian fishermen, Lim was close to death and suffering from the effects of starvation and exposure after 133 days at sea. He received the BEM from King George VI.


Poon Lim in his life raft in a photograph recreated for the US Navy for training purposes US NAVY

Lim's record was beaten by two Indian sailors, Mohamed Aftab and Thakur Miah, who escaped the British freighter *Fort Longueuil* after it was torpedoed on September 19, 1943, by a Japanese submarine. Together with five other men, Aftab and Miah reached a life raft but after 25 days only the two Indians remained alive. They drifted ashore on Sumatra after 135 days, but their ordeal was not over, as they were captured by the Japanese and held for 18 months until liberated by British troops.

AT LEAST 30,000 DEAD

Merchant Navy losses in human terms vary by source, but fall between 25%-27%, a death rate proportionately higher than any of the armed forces. At least 30,248 merchant seamen were killed with 24,000 commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission memorial at Tower Hill in London.

Likewise, 1,500 sailors died on Canadian-registered merchant ships. With a loss rate of one in seven, Canada's merchant navy also sustained a greater proportion of casualties than any of the nation's fighting services.

According to John Slader, writing in *The Red Duster at War*, Merchant Navy sailors were awarded five GCs, one EGM, 11 Albert Medals, ten KBEs, 50 CBEs, 18 DSOs, 1,077 OBEs, 213 DSCs, 49 GMs, 1,291 MBEs, 421 DSMs, 24 SGMs, 1,717 BEMs, 994 Mentions in Despatches, and 2,568 King's Commendations.

The number of mercantile dead commemorated by the CWGC is at least 36,742: 26,543 from the Merchant Navy; 6,114 Indian Merchant Navy; 1,495 British Naval Auxiliary Personnel; 1,271 Canadian Merchant Navy; 878 British Fishing Fleet; and 441 Australian Merchant Navy. Additionally, 2,713 Naval/DEMS gunners and 1,222 Maritime Regiment Royal Artillery gunners are commemorated. Thousands of naval and air force personnel also died protecting convoys.

1 CRUEL SEA

While the threat posed by the Axis could be mitigated, there was not much to be done about the sea itself. On the Arctic routes, convoys were forced to navigate a narrow lane between the German-occupied mainland and sea ice, so winter convoys had to be routed further south, closer to harm. Weather was another problem, with suitable clothing hard to find while simply moving around on deck could be dangerous, especially at night and in rough seas. Near-perpetual summer daylight made convoys easier to detect, while near-unbroken darkness masked attackers in winter. The weight of accumulated ice could capsize ships, necessitating it be removed.

Unsurprsingly, the loss rate on the Arctic convoys was higher than any other route. However, any ocean had the potential to be dangerous. The USS *Truxtun*, screening Convoys HX 168/ON 57, ran aground off Newfoundland in a gale, with 110 men killed. USS *Pollux* was also wrecked that night with 93 dead. Weather and sea states caused delays and hampered air cover, moreover, westbound convoys took about 36 hours longer than the reverse, and winter convoys 36 hours more than summer ones. The only benefit was that if the weather was bad for a convoy, it was as bad for the enemy, and attack was unlikely.

Sea ice and wintery conditions were among the dangers faced by Merchant Navy crews and their escorts OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

One rare occurrence almost caused one of the worst maritime disasters in history. On December 11, 1942, *Queen Mary* was struck broadside by a rogue wave estimated at 92ft tall. The liner rolled 52° and righted. She was carrying 11,300 people, and had she listed just 3° more, would have capsized.

Churchill War Rooms

Stepping back in time to the dark days of 1940, **Tom Baker** descends into the subterranean world of IWM Churchill War Rooms in central London

The entrance to Churchill War Rooms in Whitehall
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF IWM UNLESS STATED

It is hard to believe that some of the most important decisions of World War Two were made amid a warren of claustrophobic corridors and rooms deep beneath the New Public Offices in London. Yet standing in the Cabinet War Room, it is easy to picture the atmospheric scenes of a war ministry planning its next moves, the air hazy with smoke, while Chiefs of Staff considered pin-marked maps. Evidence remains of a leader's shouldered tension: a wooden chair, armrests pockmarked with deep scratches. This piece of furniture, like many other authentically displayed artifacts, offers a tantalising glimpse of a government at war, and the life of a man who led Britain to victory, wartime premier Winston Churchill.

The origins of IWM Churchill War Rooms go back to 1937, with an Air Ministry report outlining how aerial bombing could result in 200,000 casualties in just one week. Fearing that Parliament could be neutralised in a single aerial assault, a commission recommended that all government offices be dispersed across Britain. However, with concerns that Londoners would feel abandoned, a search began for a subterranean site within the city to house the Cabinet.

By May 1938, Hastings 'Pug' Ismay chose the basements 11ft beneath the New Public Offices to become the Cabinet War Rooms. The War Office earmarked one room for use as the nerve centre – the Cabinet Room – where all major decisions would be made. Soon after, they began constructing the Map Room, where officers would produce daily intelligence summaries. Realising that the civilian cabinet would need direct access to their military counterparts and that the hundreds of staff would need somewhere to stay, accommodation was also added.

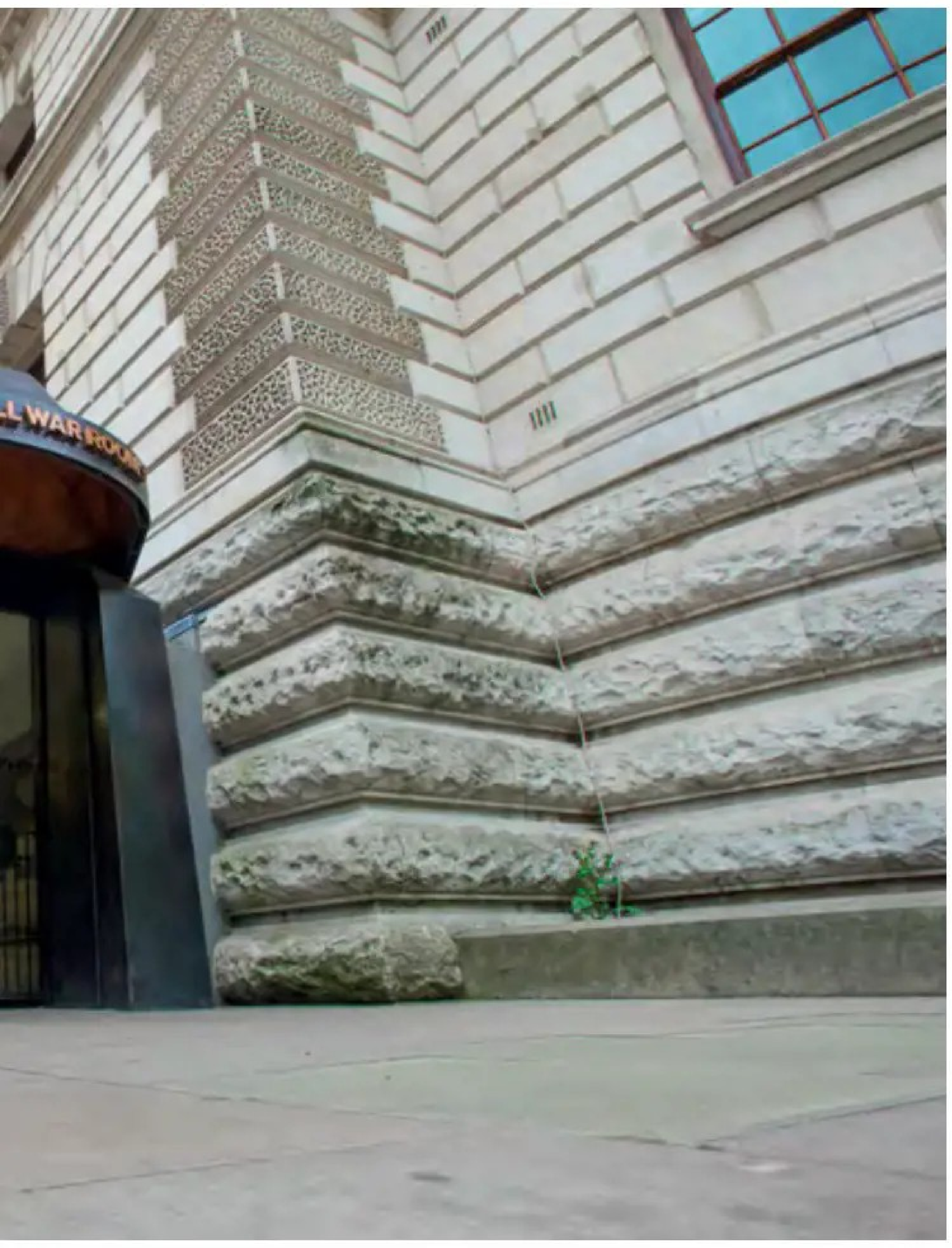
Corridors along the visitor route

The War Rooms were operational by August 27, 1939, and following Churchill's appointment as prime minister, he paid a visit and upon seeing the central Cabinet Room, declared: "This is the room from which I will direct the war."

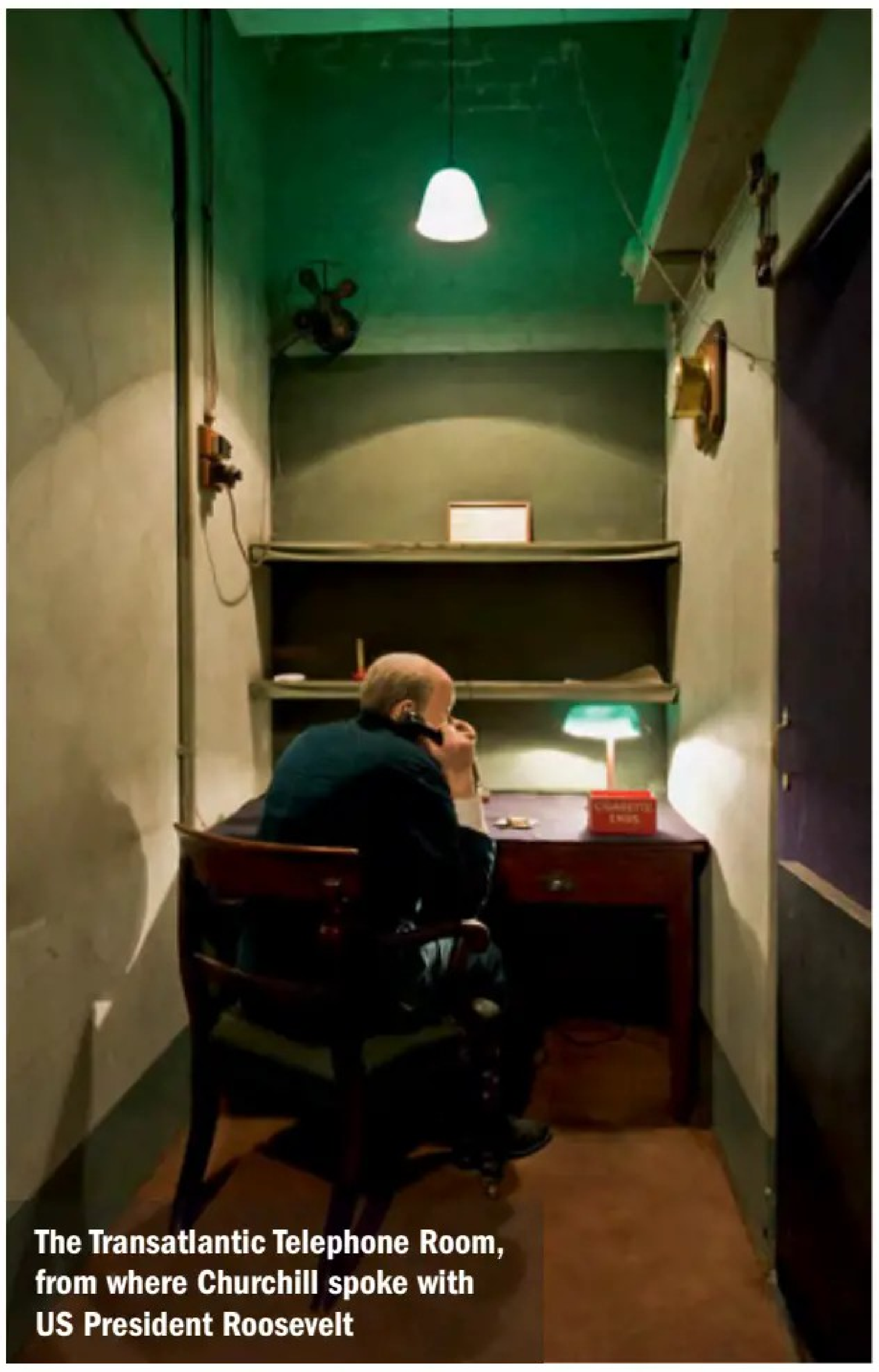
In total, the site was used 117 times by the War Cabinet, primarily during the Blitz and V-Weapon campaigns. However, the subterranean rooms dually acted as a round-the-clock 'strategic nerve centre', being manned by a small army of clerks, civil servants, military officers, switchboard operators, and administrators.

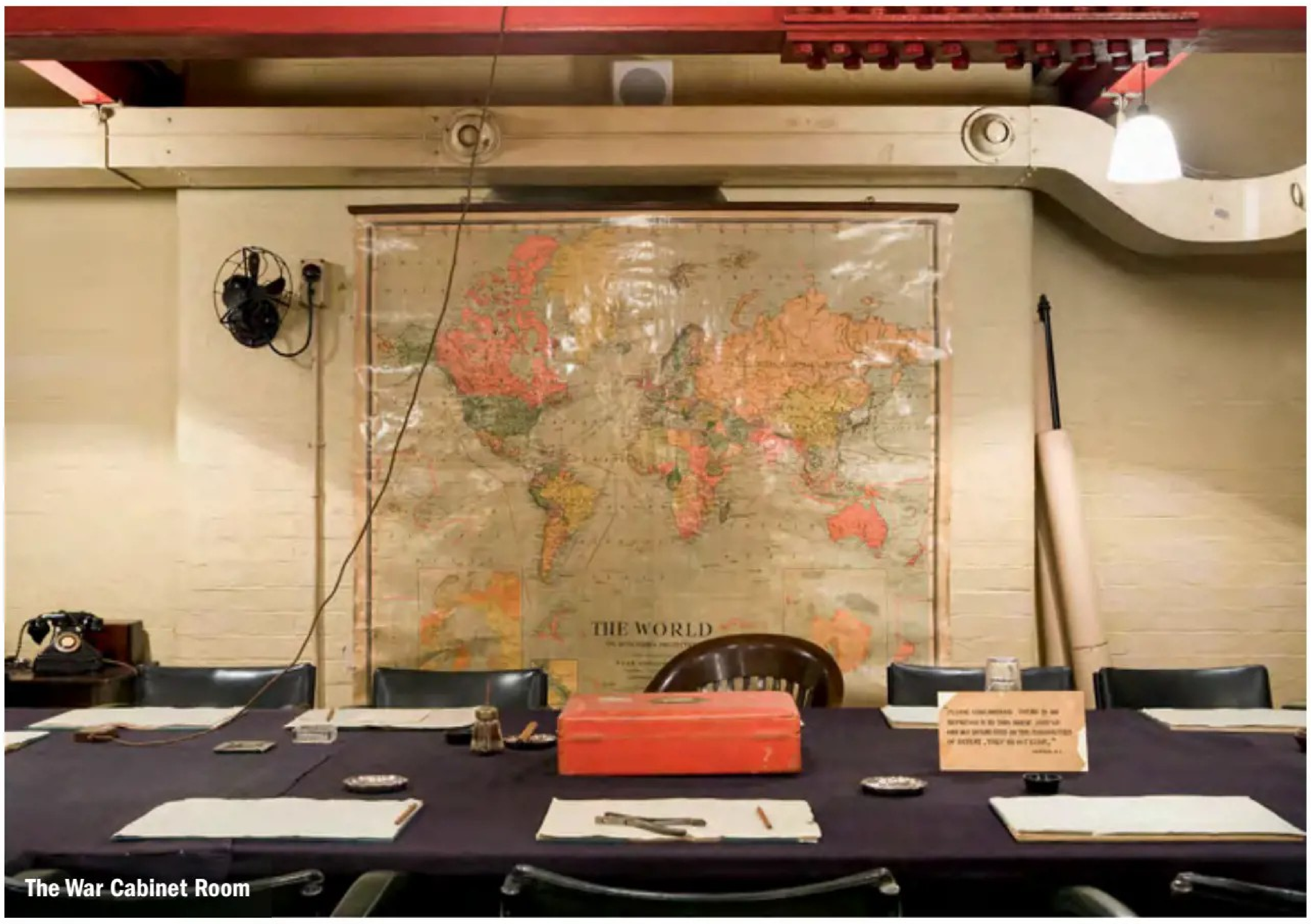
Despite its importance, the site met an ignominious end just a day after Japan's surrender. All staff were evacuated and the lights were turned off. Although some rooms were cleared, the Map Room, Cabinet Room, Churchill's Bedroom, and the Transatlantic Telephone Room were simply left 'as was' – their contents frozen in time at the moment victory over Japan was declared.

After the question of public access was raised in the House of Commons in 1948, Lord Ismay and caretaker Mr George Rance organised a series of invite-only tours for members of the press, and following this, the site became public knowledge. Such was the interest in this 'fabled nerve centre' that tens of thousands



Seating positions within the War Cabinet Room have been left exactly as they appeared during the war


The Transatlantic Telephone Room, from where Churchill spoke with US President Roosevelt



The War Cabinet Room

of visitation requests were sent to the government every year, although few were accepted.

By the 1980s, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had approached the Imperial War Museum to take up custodianship of the site, and on April 4, 1984, the location officially opened to the public. In 2005, 9,100 square feet of the War Rooms were redeveloped as a biographical museum dedicated to exploring Churchill's life.

On arrival, visitors descend stairs into the War Rooms and receive a multi-media audio guide, before being directed into the maze of corridors. Speaking to *Britain at War,* curator Kate Clements said: "The tour begins in the Cabinet War Room. The space has been left exactly as it would have appeared during the war". Twenty seating positions are laid out, with pencils, paper, official documents and ashtrays, while the audio guide discusses the use of the room, who attended the meetings, and the nature of the discussions held - giving a sense of atmosphere to the war cabinet meetings.

Located off the centre of the main corridor is an inauspicious storeroom – a sign on the door simply reading 'Keep Locked'. This 'Secret Room' housed Churchill's Transatlantic Telephone with which he spoke with President Roosevelt.

Although visitors are unable to step inside many of the smaller rooms adjoining the main or auxiliary corridors, doors are left open so they can peer inside and look at the authentic 1940s décor and furnishings. The most numerous of these are private rooms for important staff, but visitors can also see office rooms for Joint Planners, high-ranking officers and a vast litany of other important advisors. Highlights to look out for include Cabinet Secretary Sir Edward Bridges's office and Winston Churchill's bedroom – only slept in three times but used to broadcast many of his wartime speeches.

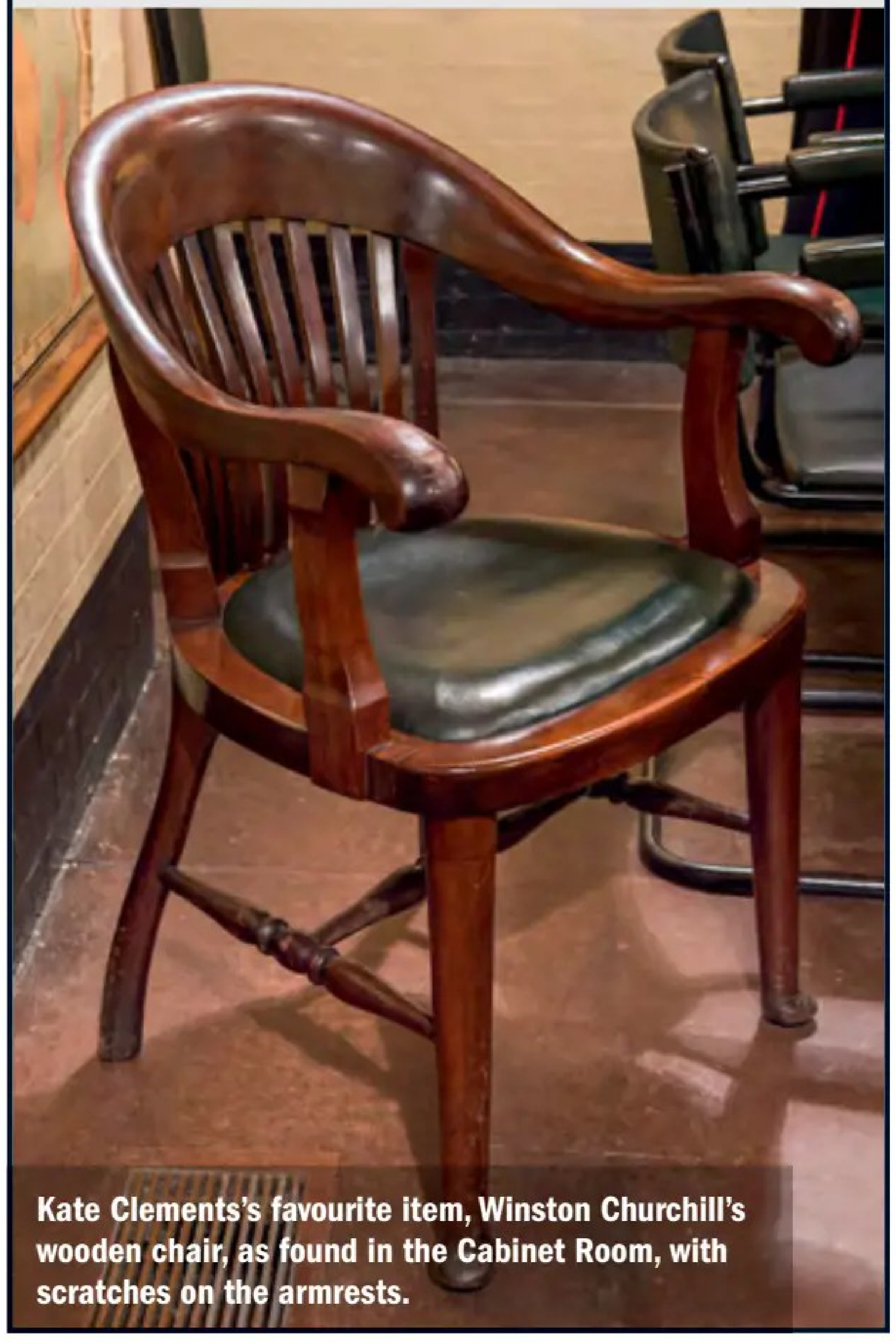
The next stop is the Map Room. Here, officers from all armed services and civil servants from the Ministry of Home Security sat awaiting phone calls to tell them of news from the front. Received information was then passed to plotters, who attached pins to large, wall-mounted maps, charting the latest developments in

Winston Churchill's bedroom, only slept in three times

The Chiefs of Staff Conference Room

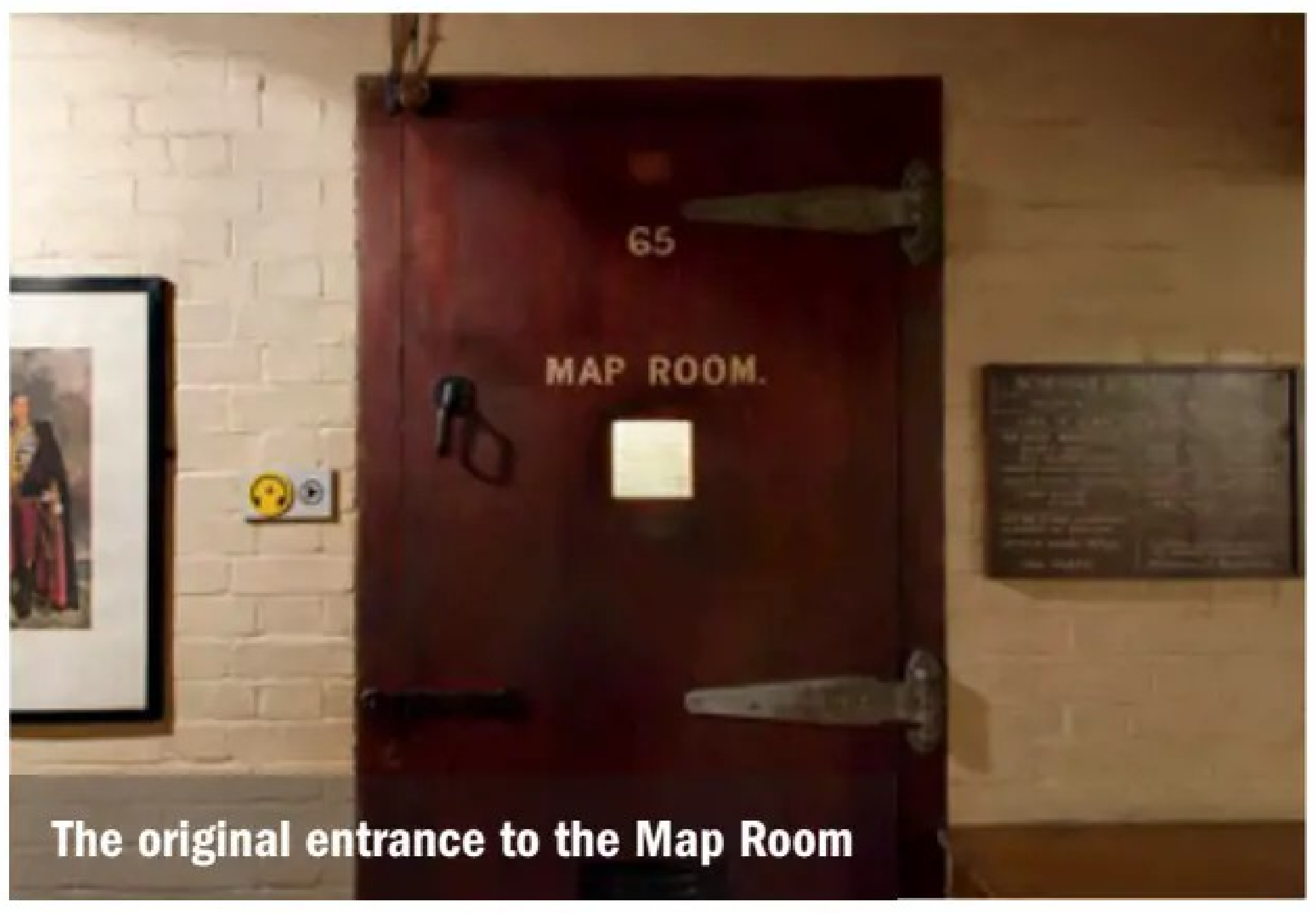
CURATOR'S FAVOURITE

Churchill War Rooms curator Kate Clements selected as her favourite object a seemingly inconspicuous chair in the Cabinet Room. "At the head of the table is Churchill's wooden chair, and guests can still see deep indentations and scratch marks left by nails or rings on the armrests, which speaks volumes of the nervous energy of its occupant," she said. "Like many other elements of the War Rooms, Churchill left his mark, quite literally, upon this piece of furniture – it gives a clear impression of high tensions surrounding the world-changing meetings carried out within this room".



Kate Clements's favourite item, Winston Churchill's wooden chair, as found in the Cabinet Room, with scratches on the armrests.

The audio guide lends a sense of excitement to the Map Room



The original entrance to the Map Room

The Map Room

Clementine Churchill

Clementine Churchill's bedroom
M LANNI

a specific theatre. "This room has a 'wow' factor to it," said Kate. "Accompanied by our audio guide, visitors get a sense of the daily clamour and commotion that came with working in such a lively space."

Before the end of the tour, visitors can explore the Churchill Museum – a separate experience that tells Churchill's life story. The centre of the museum consists of an animated audio-visual discussing Churchill's lifetime, from his birth in 1874 to his death in 1965, consisting of static text, quotes, photographs and animations. Adorning display cases or exhibits throughout the museum space are hundreds of 'Churchillian' artefacts, highlights of which include the Union Jack that was draped across his coffin, a selection of his wartime uniforms, and the door to No 10 Downing Street in use during his tenures as prime minister.

Overall, IWM Churchill War Rooms excellently captures the essence of a government at war, and the life and times of its leader, Winston Churchill. Alongside a vast selection of fascinating artefacts, authentically displayed rooms, and the helpful audio guide talking visitors through every conceivable element of the War Rooms, the location oozes atmosphere, enabling visitors to feel as if they have been transported back to the dark days of 1940. This is an essential place to visit the next time you find yourself in the capital. BW

VISITOR INFORMATION

IWM Churchill War Rooms is open daily, 9.30am to 6pm, with the last entry at 5pm.

Admission: Adult (15+) £33, Child (5-15) £16.50, Concessions (65+, student, disabled) £29.70. IWM Members enjoy free admission. Carers (one per disabled visitor) and children under 5 (must be accompanied by an adult) also enter for free
Address: Churchill War Rooms, Clive Steps, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AQ
What3words location: keen.early.pure
Closest station: St James's Park Underground (0.3 miles)
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Web: iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms

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Own goal

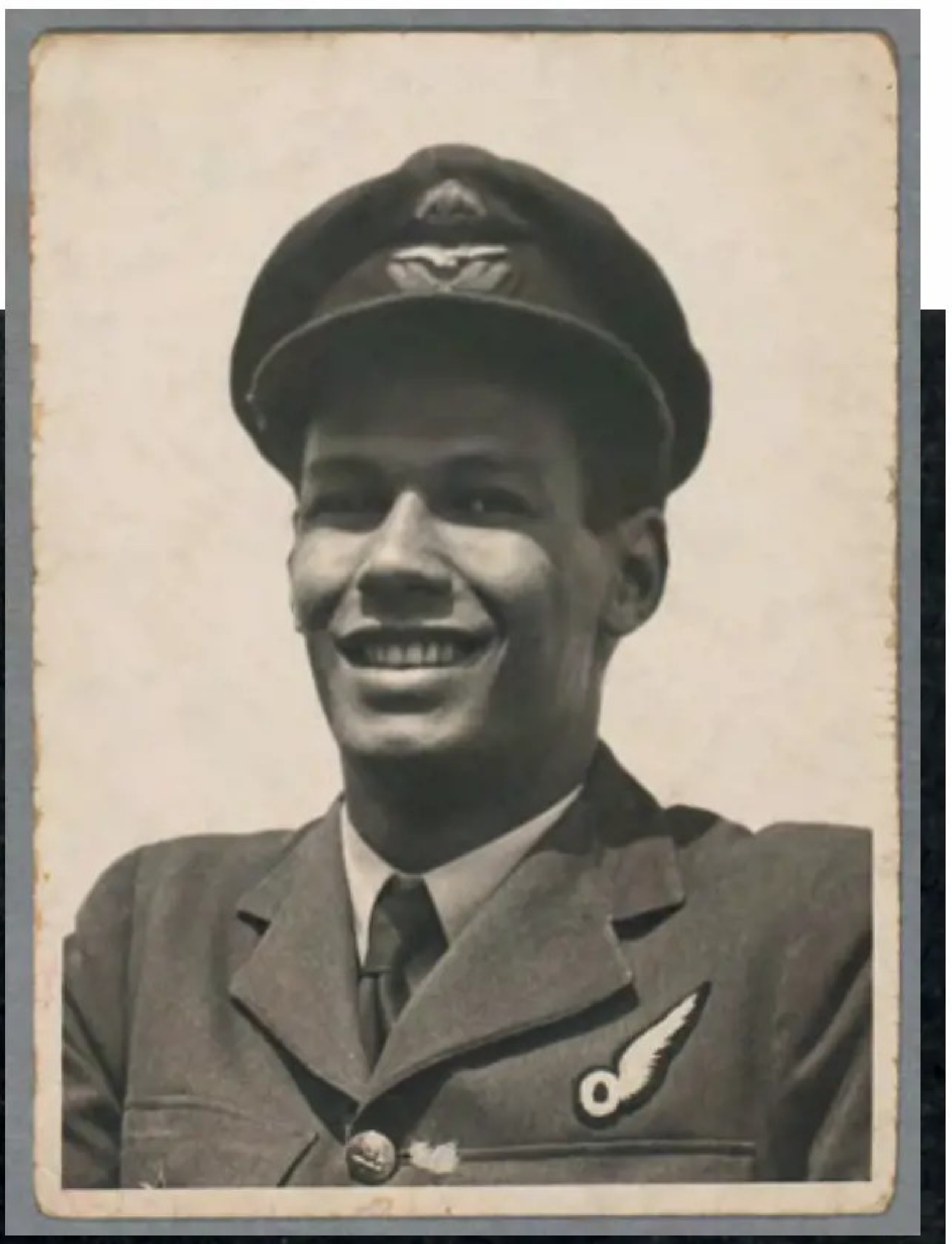
RAF Wahn, Cologne, West Germany, September 1, 1953

With Cold War tensions rising, in the early 1950s it was decided to expand the RAF's night fighter presence in West Germany. As part of the surge, 87 Squadron was reformed, flying the Gloster Meteor NF.11. The first of these two-seat night fighters, fitted with airborne interception Mk.10 radar in the nose and four 20mm Hispano cannon in the wings, arrived on March 31, 1952, but deliveries were slow and the squadron's full complement was not reached until June 10. Crews conducted interceptions to hone their skills, and armed aircraft were held on 'Battle Flight' alert to intercept possible intruders. Unfortunately, there was a steady stream of accidents resulting in four aircraft destroyed and four entering major repairs. On September 1, 1953, when NF.11 WD674 was being serviced while on armed alert, its guns were inadvertently discharged and struck WM183, which was completely destroyed.

87 SQUADRON RECORDS VIA ANDREW THOMAS

CHARISMATIC CAPTIVE

Former British High Commissioner to Guyana, **Greg Quinn** OBE, discovers how the POW experiences of the late Cy Grant motivated the influential Guyanese entertainer and activist



MAIN: **A 103 Squadron Lancaster Mk.III on the flarepath at RAF Elsham Wolds prior to a raid against Duisburg** IWM/GETTY
ABOVE: **Airman and actor Cy Grant** AUTHOR/LONDON ARCHIVES

I suspect not many people today have heard of Cyril Ewart Grant, better known as Cy. I certainly hadn't until sometime after arriving in Guyana in 2015 as the British High Commissioner. In the event, a chance reference from a colleague as I was researching for a Remembrance Day speech led me down an amazing road of discovery.

> *"I found the captivating story of a man who was one of the first West Indian officers in the RAF, but also the first person of African descent to appear regularly on British television"*

I found the captivating story of a man who was one of the first West Indian officers in the RAF, but also the first person of African descent to appear regularly on British television, who later became a social activist dedicated to addressing racial inequality and encouraging multicultural understanding after the British inner-city riots of the early 1980s.

That was Cy's post-war life. Where it all began was somewhat different.

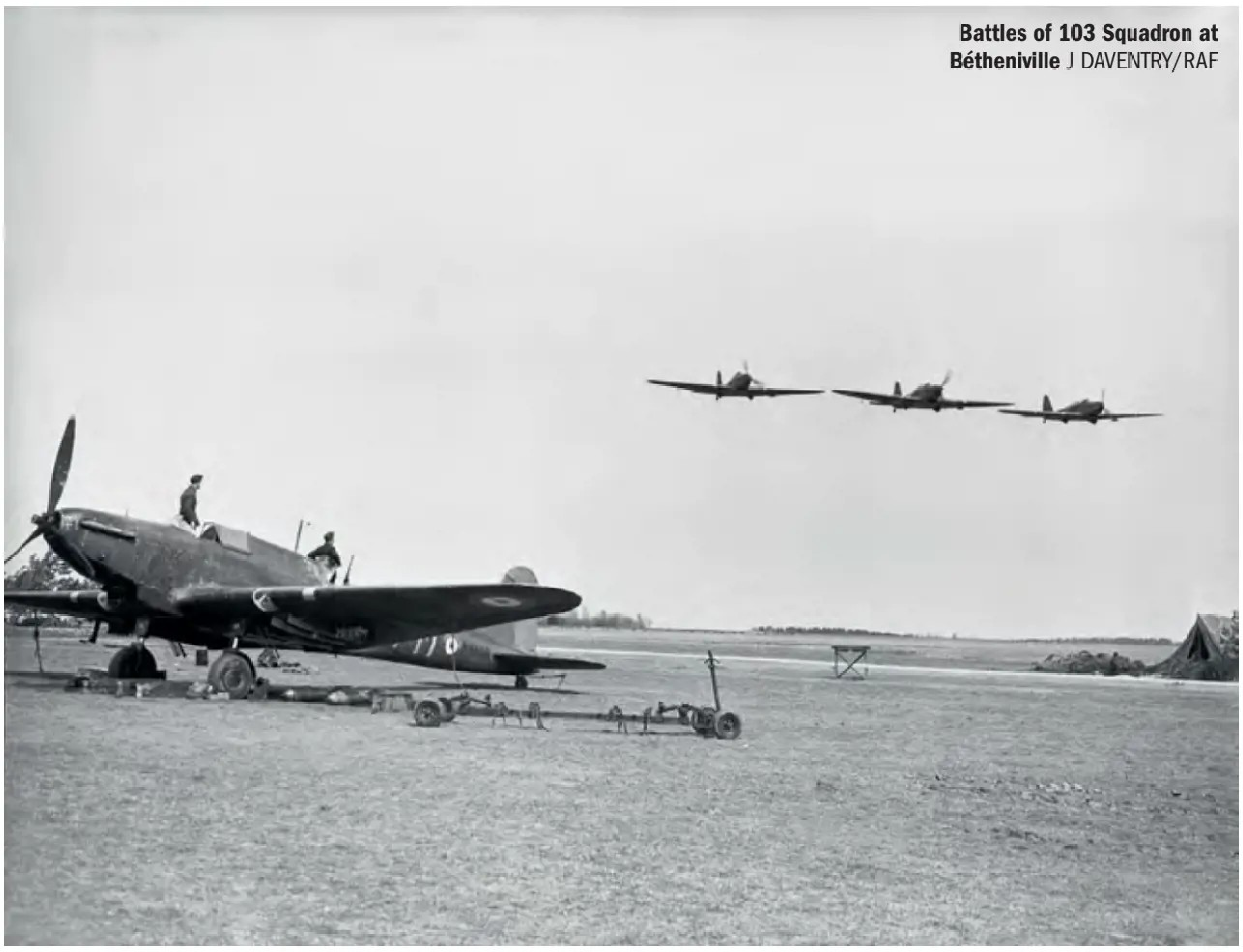
Joining the RAF

Cy was born in Beterverwagting on November 8, 1919, in what was then British Guiana. In 1941 he joined the RAF and trained as a navigator – one of a handful of West Indian officers accepted at the time and one of just four Guyanese selected to serve as aircrew.

In reality, and to be frank, these officers were accepted in the face of resistance and prejudice from senior officers. However, it was 1941, the war was taking a toll, and the RAF was in dire need of aircrew. Any prejudices (no matter how deeply felt – and in some cases they ran very deep) had to be put to one side. Ultimately some 440 Caribbean/West Indian aircrew, mostly from Jamaica and Trinidad, served in the RAF during World War Two with 103 decorated (an impressive 23%). Some 70 of that 440 were commissioned – of which Cy was one – and they suffered a loss rate in excess of 30%.

In his 2006 autobiography, *A Member of the RAF of Indeterminate Race*, Cy described his motivations to enlist, writing that he "had been prompted solely by a desire for adventure and to get away from what I foresaw would be a dull future in a British colony". Life in British Guiana could be difficult, with well-educated youths seeking good, hard work but unable to find exciting job roles befitting of their interests and schooling. Many thousands served at sea as merchant ship and tanker crews or joined the British military.

Cy, like many others from the diverse set of British West Indian backgrounds – black, white, rich, poor – wanted escape. His prospects were limited, and he sought adventure. Ultimately, however, he came to believe that "warfare denudes you of your humanity… I feel no sense of pride". Although this in no way diminished Cy's respect for what his fellow aircrew had



Battles of 103 Squadron at Bétheniville J DAVENTRY/RAF

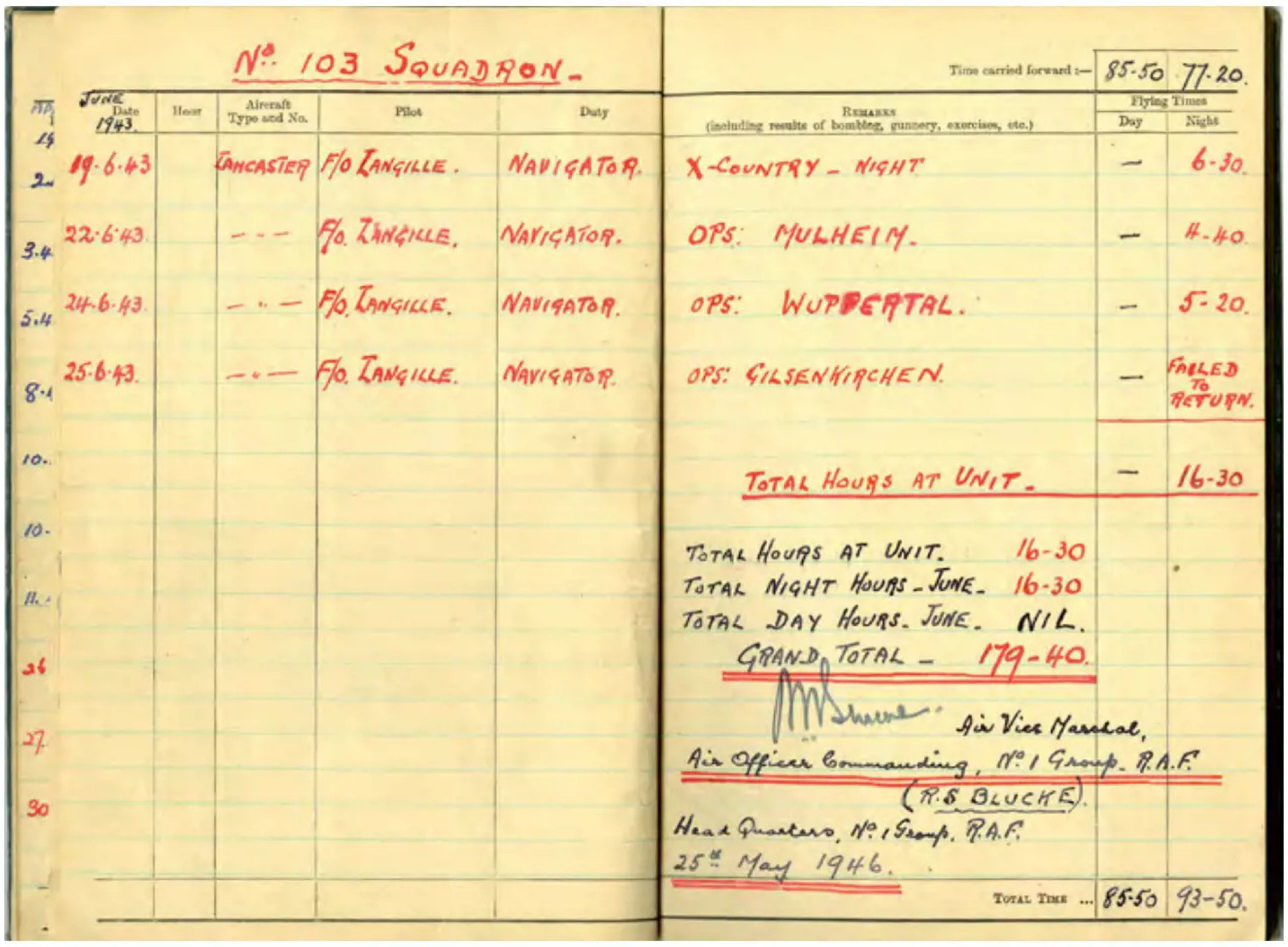
A 103 Squadron crew boards Lancaster Mk.III ED646/PM-V at Elsham Wolds, March 1943 ALAMY

done, or his subsequent work to see that their sacrifice be properly acknowledged.

Cy qualified as a navigator and astronomical navigator in 1943 and joined 103 Squadron based at RAF Elsham Wolds in Lincolnshire. The squadron had originally formed in September 1917 as part of the Royal Flying Corps and was disbanded at the end of the World War One. However, it was reformed in August 1936 and became part of the ill-fated Advanced Air Striking Force, equipped with Fairey Battle Mk.I light bombers.

The AASF was formed in 1939 from ten squadrons of Battles, and it had been agreed that should war come, the force would pre-deploy to French bases.

It was not an easy time for the Squadron. The force was sent to airfields in the Rheims area in September 1939 and was soon joined by additional Blenheim bomber and Hurricane fighter squadrons. However, the new French digs were lacking next to their Bomber Command bases at home, and fuel shortages at first plagued the squadron.



Nº 103 SQUADRON.

Time carried forward :— 85-50 77-20.

JUNE Date 1943.	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Flying Times Day	Flying Times Night
19·6·43		LANCASTER	F/O LANGILLE.	NAVIGATOR.	X-COUNTRY - NIGHT	—	6-30.
22·6·43.		- - -	F/O. LANGILLE.	NAVIGATOR.	OPS: MULHEIM.	—	4-40.
24·6·43.		- " -	F/O. LANGILLE.	NAVIGATOR.	OPS: WUPPERTAL.	—	5-20.
25·6·43.		- " -	F/O. LANGILLE.	NAVIGATOR.	OPS: GILSENKIRCHEN.	—	FAILED TO RETURN.
					TOTAL HOURS AT UNIT.	—	16-30

TOTAL HOURS AT UNIT. 16-30
TOTAL NIGHT HOURS - JUNE. 16-30
TOTAL DAY HOURS. JUNE. NIL.
GRAND TOTAL - 179-40.

Air Vice Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding, Nº 1 Group. R.A.F.
(R.S BLUCKE).
Head Quarters, Nº 1 Group. R.A.F.
25th May 1946.

TOTAL TIME ... 85-50 93-50.

Cy's logbook shows a total of just four sorties with 103 Squadron – one of which was a training flight – and not even 17 flying hours accrued with the unit AUTHOR

Once German attention turned toward France and the Low Countries, the AASF suffered huge losses in the first few days of the invasion with more than 100 Battles lost by the end of May 1940. After the fall of France, the remnants of the AASF returned to RAF Abingdon and then RAF Newton and re-equipped with Wellingtons as part of 1 Group, before moving to RAF Elsham Wolds in July 1941 where it remained for the rest of the war.

Third-time unlucky

The first operation 103 Squadron flew from Elsham was on July 24, 1941, when its Wellingtons attacked the German warship *Gneisenau*, then docked at Brest. In August 1942, the squadron converted to Halifaxs and, in November, Lancasters. It disbanded again in November 1945, by which point 1,155 men had lost their lives serving with the unit.

On his posting to the squadron, Flight Lieutenant Grant joined a Lancaster crew. He flew his first operational mission on June 22, 1943, flying to Mulheim.

On the night of June 25/26, on only the crew's third operational sortie, Grant and the rest of his crew in Lancaster Mk.I serial W4827 were shot down over the Netherlands after bombing Gelsenkirchen. Their attacker was 10./NJG 1 night fighter pilot Oberfeldwebel Karl-Heinz Scherfling, flying a Bf 110 G-4.

Cy later described how they came under repeated attack from night fighters as they returned home, adding: "By the time we reached the coast, we were a flaming comet over the Dutch sky. Both wings were on fire." He realised that they

After being betrayed, Cy was sent to Stalag Luft III and held there, or in one of its subcamps, for much of the rest of World War Two HULTON/GETTY

A 103 Squadron Lancaster flying a daylight bombing sortie OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

> *"By the time we reached the coast, we were a flaming comet over the Dutch sky"*
>
> FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CY GRANT

would not reach their home base, and then suddenly found himself falling: "We seemed locked in a timeless moment of inertia when suddenly, with a deafening blast which lit up everything, our craft blew up and disintegrated freeing us from each other – a free-fall into Eternity."

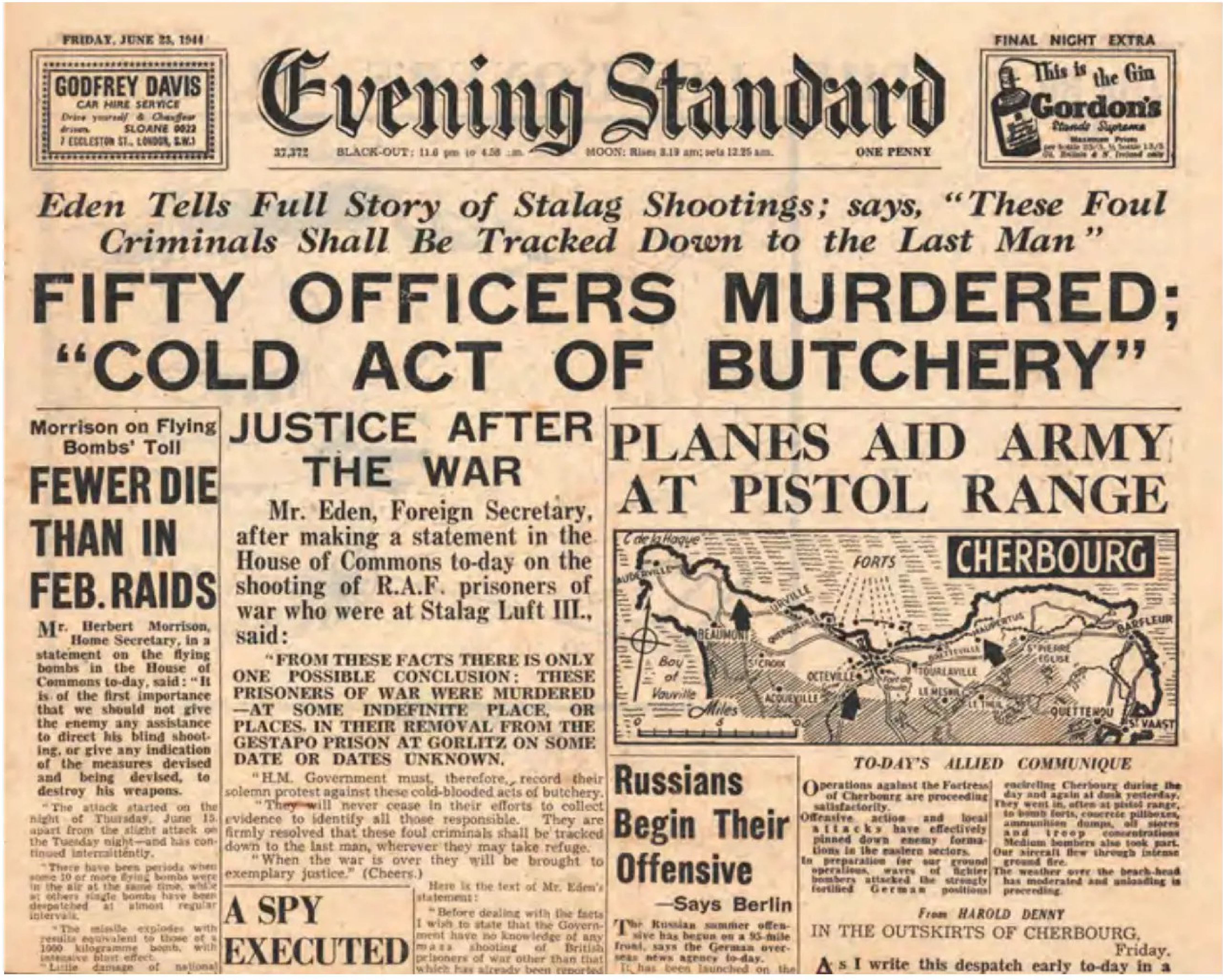
Fortunately, he was able to land safely by parachute, later stating: "I was shot down, and it all came as a great shock to me when I stood like Ruth among the alien corn." After a moment to gather his wits, Cy attempted to evade capture. However, after a short period on the run, he was given up by a Dutch policeman and, along with the majority of his crew, was captured. Two of his comrades did not survive, air gunner Pilot Officer Joseph Addison later died of wounds while the aircraft's flight engineer Sergeant Ronald Hollywood was killed.

Cy had just 16 hours 30 minutes flying time with 103 Squadron in his logbook. His total flying time was 179 hours 40 minutes – 85 hours and 50 minutes by day and 93 hours 50 minutes by night. He was imprisoned first in Stalag Luft III near Sagen, then Belaria. In a strange quirk of fate, the German commandant at Stalag Luft III had visited British Guiana before the war.

Cy's arrival at Stalag Luft III was not without comment. At the time, he was the sole black officer in the camp, and he remembered: "My arrival created a bit of a stir among the Germans. A black officer!" Such curiosity led to a description of him that later became the title of his autobiography – *A Member of the RAF of Indeterminate Race* originates from a 1943 article published in *Völkischer Beobachter* – the Nazi Party's daily newspaper – covering Cy's capture and ethnicity.

In many ways the POWs were left to their own devices: "Apart from the daily appels [roll call], one in morning and the other in the evening, the Germans left us more-or-less to our own devices. They were, of course, continuously snooping to check up on any tunnelling." Not that escape was easy, nor was life behind the wire: "What comforts we enjoyed were due chiefly to our own efforts, as well as to the Red Cross," he said.

Cy's major concern was the lack of information: "There was no access to reliable news about the progress of the



FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 1944

GODFREY DAVIS
CAR HIRE SERVICE
Drive yourself & Chauffeur driven. SLOANE 0022
7 ECCLESTON ST., LONDON, S.W.1

Evening Standard

37,372 BLACK-OUT: 11.6 pm to 4.58 a.m. MOON: Rises 8.19 am; sets 12.25 a.m. ONE PENNY

FINAL NIGHT EXTRA

This is the Gin
Gordon's
Stands Supreme

Eden Tells Full Story of Stalag Shootings; says, "These Foul Criminals Shall Be Tracked Down to the Last Man"

FIFTY OFFICERS MURDERED; "COLD ACT OF BUTCHERY"

Morrison on Flying Bombs' Toll

FEWER DIE THAN IN FEB. RAIDS

Mr. Herbert Morrison, Home Secretary, in a statement on the flying bombs in the House of Commons to-day, said: "It is of the first importance that we should not give the enemy any assistance to direct his blind shooting, or give any indication of the measures devised and being devised, to destroy his weapons.

"The attack started on the night of Thursday, June 15, apart from the slight attack on the Tuesday night—and has continued intermittently.

"There have been periods when some 10 or more flying bombs were in the air at the same time, while at others single bombs have been despatched at almost regular intervals.

"The missile explodes with results equivalent to those of a 1000 kilogramme bomb, with intensive blast effect.

"Little damage of national

JUSTICE AFTER THE WAR

Mr. Eden, Foreign Secretary, after making a statement in the House of Commons to-day on the shooting of R.A.F. prisoners of war who were at Stalag Luft III., said:

"FROM THESE FACTS THERE IS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE CONCLUSION: THESE PRISONERS OF WAR WERE MURDERED—AT SOME INDEFINITE PLACE, OR PLACES, IN THEIR REMOVAL FROM THE GESTAPO PRISON AT GORLITZ ON SOME DATE OR DATES UNKNOWN.

"H.M. Government must, therefore, record their solemn protest against these cold-blooded acts of butchery.

"They will never cease in their efforts to collect evidence to identify all those responsible. They are firmly resolved that these foul criminals shall be tracked down to the last man, wherever they may take refuge.

"When the war is over they will be brought to exemplary justice." (Cheers.)

A SPY EXECUTED

Here is the text of Mr. Eden's statement:

"Before dealing with the facts I wish to state that the Government have no knowledge of any mass shooting of British prisoners of war other than that which has already been reported

PLANES AID ARMY AT PISTOL RANGE

Russians Begin Their Offensive

—Says Berlin

The Russian summer offensive has begun on a 95-mile front, says the German overseas news agency to-day.

It has been launched on the

TO-DAY'S ALLIED COMMUNIQUE

Operations against the Fortress of Cherbourg are proceeding satisfactorily.

Offensive action and local attacks have effectively pinned down enemy formations in the eastern sectors.

In preparation for our ground operations, waves of fighter bombers attacked the strongly fortified German positions encircling Cherbourg during the day and again at dusk yesterday.

They went in, often at pistol range, to bomb forts, concrete pillboxes, ammunition dumps, all stores and troop concentrations. Medium bombers also took part.

Our aircraft flew through intense ground fire.

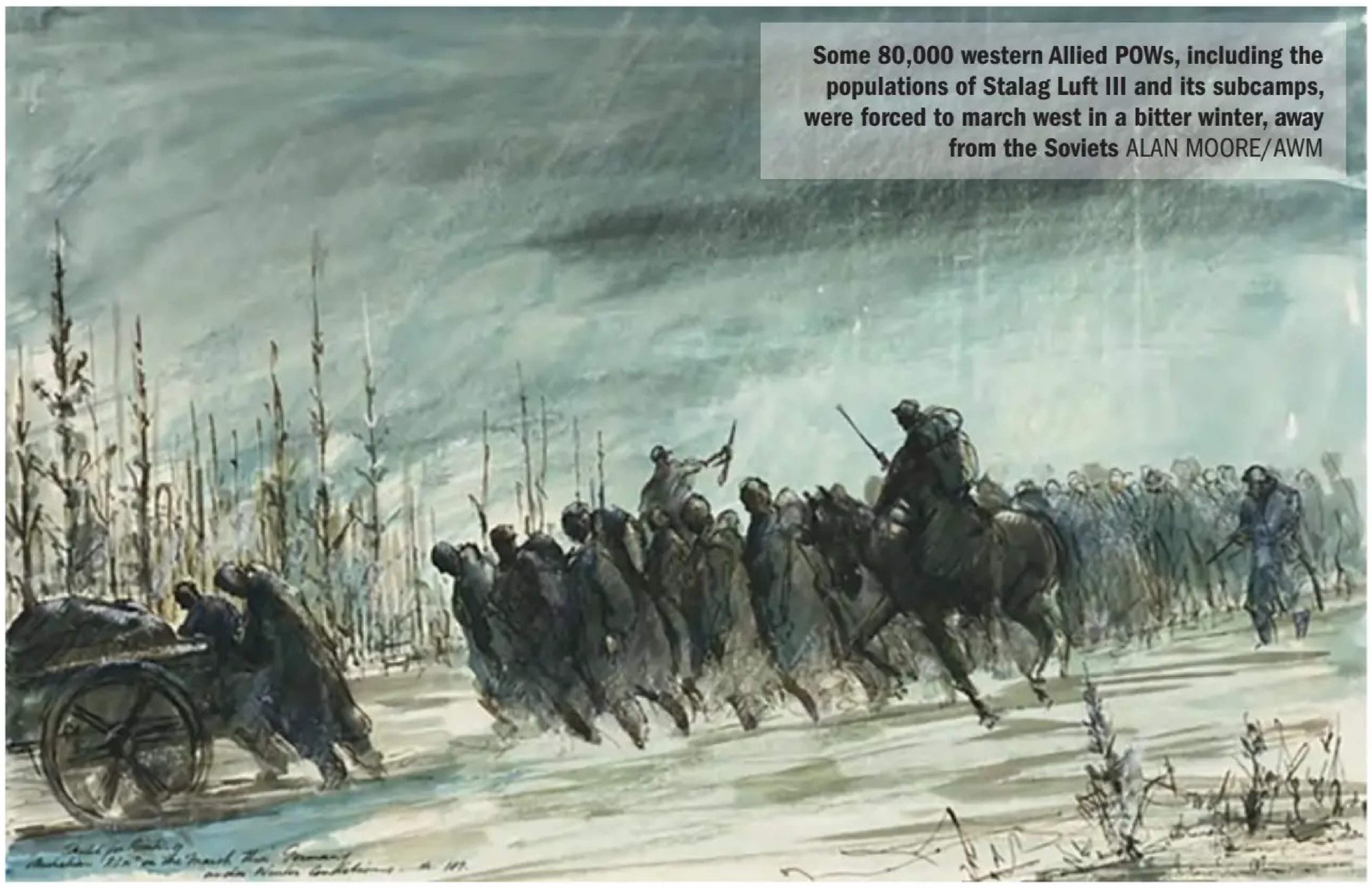
The weather over the beach-head has moderated and unloading is proceeding.

From HAROLD DENNY

IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF CHERBOURG, Friday.

As I write this despatch early to-day in a

When news of the execution of the Great Escape 50 reached Cy, he was still a POW in Belaria Officer's camp. The murders became a front-page story JOHN FROST NEWSPAPERS/ALAMY



Some 80,000 western Allied POWs, including the populations of Stalag Luft III and its subcamps, were forced to march west in a bitter winter, away from the Soviets ALAN MOORE/AWM

war, only the occasional heavily censored letter from home. Uncertainty about the outcome of the war did not help the situation. There was also a shortage of decent food, and the two-tiered wooden beds were uncomfortable."

After a move to Belaria Officer's camp (a sub-camp of Stalag Luft III located a few miles south of the main compounds), the POWs focussed on what Cy described as their "duty to try to escape or assist in the escape of other prisoners… even though most were never destined to get out and make a bid for liberty." They set up a "sophisticated" surveillance network to monitor what the prison guards were up to and to secure and cover the near-constant tunnelling.

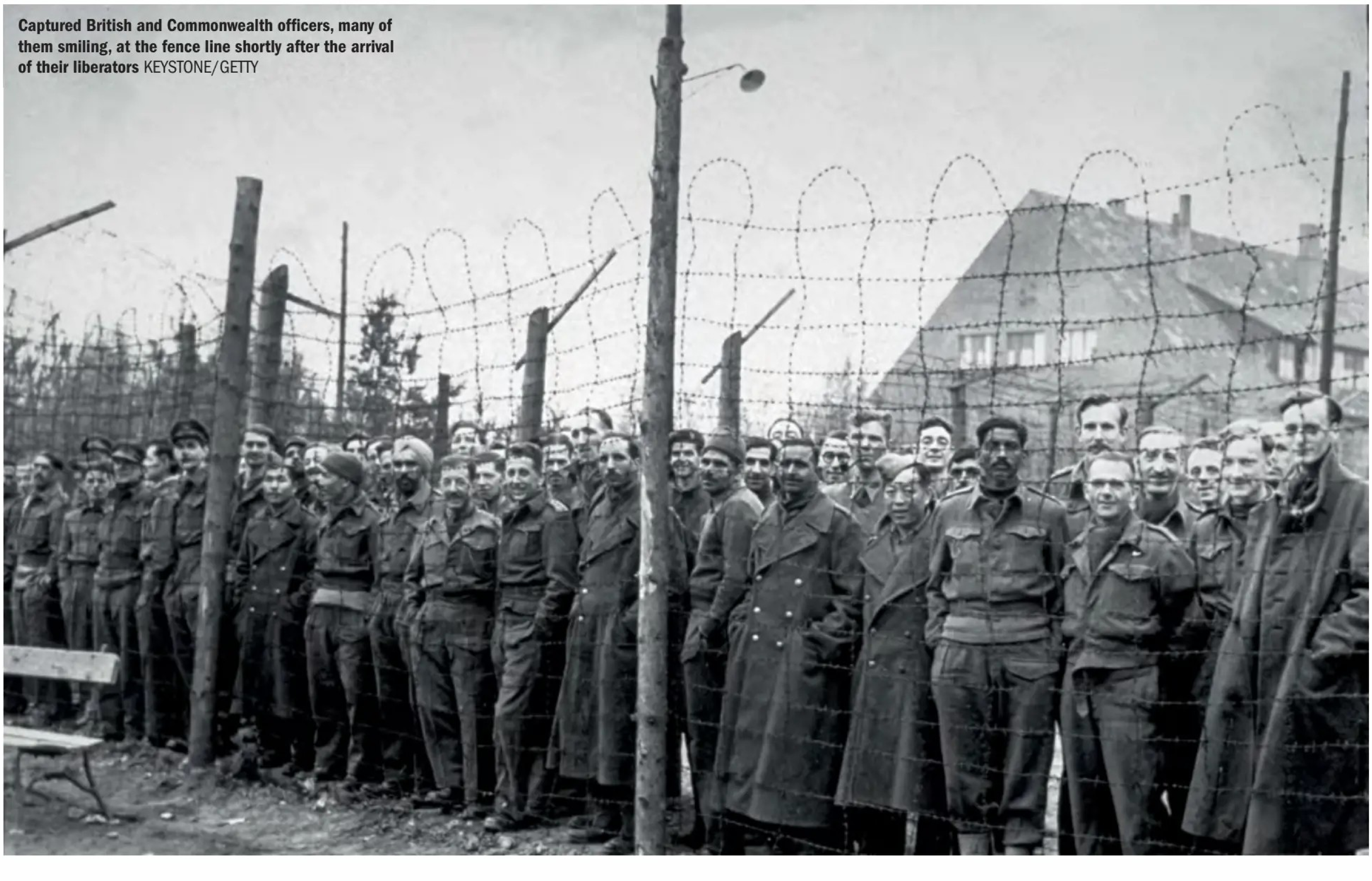
Cy was in Belaria when the 'Great Escape' took place and news of the infamous, murderous outcome of that mass break soon reached the camp. The atrocities unsurprisingly caused a change in the POW's relations with their captors and Cy later wrote: "Weeks later came the news that 40 prisoners had been recaptured and shot. This figure was later confirmed as 50. This sent a wave of resentment and bitterness towards the Germans that never left us. Loud protestations were made by the Senior British Officer, and a policy of non-co-operation came into effect.

"Henceforth we were as awkward as we possibly could be. Whatever respect had existed, disappeared in the face of the German actions."

Post-war, he gave an interview to a local newspaper in Guyana, in which he reflected: "It never occurred to me that I might be taken prisoner some day; and I had thought that if I was shot down it would be no difficult matter to avoid being captured." It was not necessarily an ill-informed opinion, but it was one that sadly failed to take account of those who would betray people like Cy. Then again, Cy did say that "aircrew are optimists – and that's what kept them going."

Disgusted though he was by the fate of the Great Escape 50, Cy nevertheless came to view his experiences behind the wire as formative. In his own words: "Being a POW for two years was equivalent to having a university education – not only did I have an opportunity to reflect upon my life… but during this time I actually began to question how I got to be in this situation and to look back at my life in Guyana and what had prompted me to join up."

On further reflection, he added: "It certainly had nothing to do with patriotism. Nearly two years of imprisonment had given me the opportunity to reconsider my



Captured British and Commonwealth officers, many of them smiling, at the fence line shortly after the arrival of their liberators KEYSTONE/GETTY

> ***“Weeks later came the news that 50 POWs had been recaptured and shot. This sent a wave of resentment and bitterness towards the Germans that never left us”***
>
> FLIGHT LIEUTENANT CY GRANT

life and reassess my decision to join the RAF. Was I fighting for King and country? Or was my fight to escape the life inherited by being on the wrong side of the British Colonial system?”

It was a debate that many probably had, and not just those from the then British colonies. Cy pondered whether his comrades from ‘mainland UK’ had similar feelings, asking whether they questioned what they were doing. Most likely yes, he concluded – although at the end of the day those who served, did so notwithstanding the horrors some of them saw and many of them never subsequently spoke about.

But it was not all negative for Cy: “As an officer in the RAF, you were among the cream of officers. I met all sorts of people, including writers, schoolteachers, lecturers and scientists. Living for two years close together while POWs, I learnt a great deal and asked a lot of questions – it’s where I matured.”

From Sagen to the Elbe

With Germany clearly about to lose the war, and in the face of Soviet advances, Cy and his fellow POWs were forcibly evacuated from Belaria/Stalug Luft III and marched west. The Long March, as the terrible walk became known, began in the last days of January 1945.

It was extremely difficult time. The weather was bitterly cold, and it was snowing. The men, woefully ill-equipped for the march, shared congested roads with civilian refugees and their guards were typically indifferent to their suffering – at best. Those who fell or fell behind were abandoned to an icy fate. Food was in short supply, and everyone suffered. The inmates from Beleria, including Cy, ultimately arrived at Stalag III-A Luckenwalde, near Berlin, at the end of the first week in February.

However, if anyone expected relief from hardship, they were to be disappointed. At Luckenwalde, during one of the bitterest winters Europe has seen, there was no heating and no water. The accommodation blocks were infested with bedbugs and lice, and the POWs were thoroughly miserable. Cy noted: “Life here, in the closing months of the war, was beastly. There was little to eat, and it was bitterly cold.”

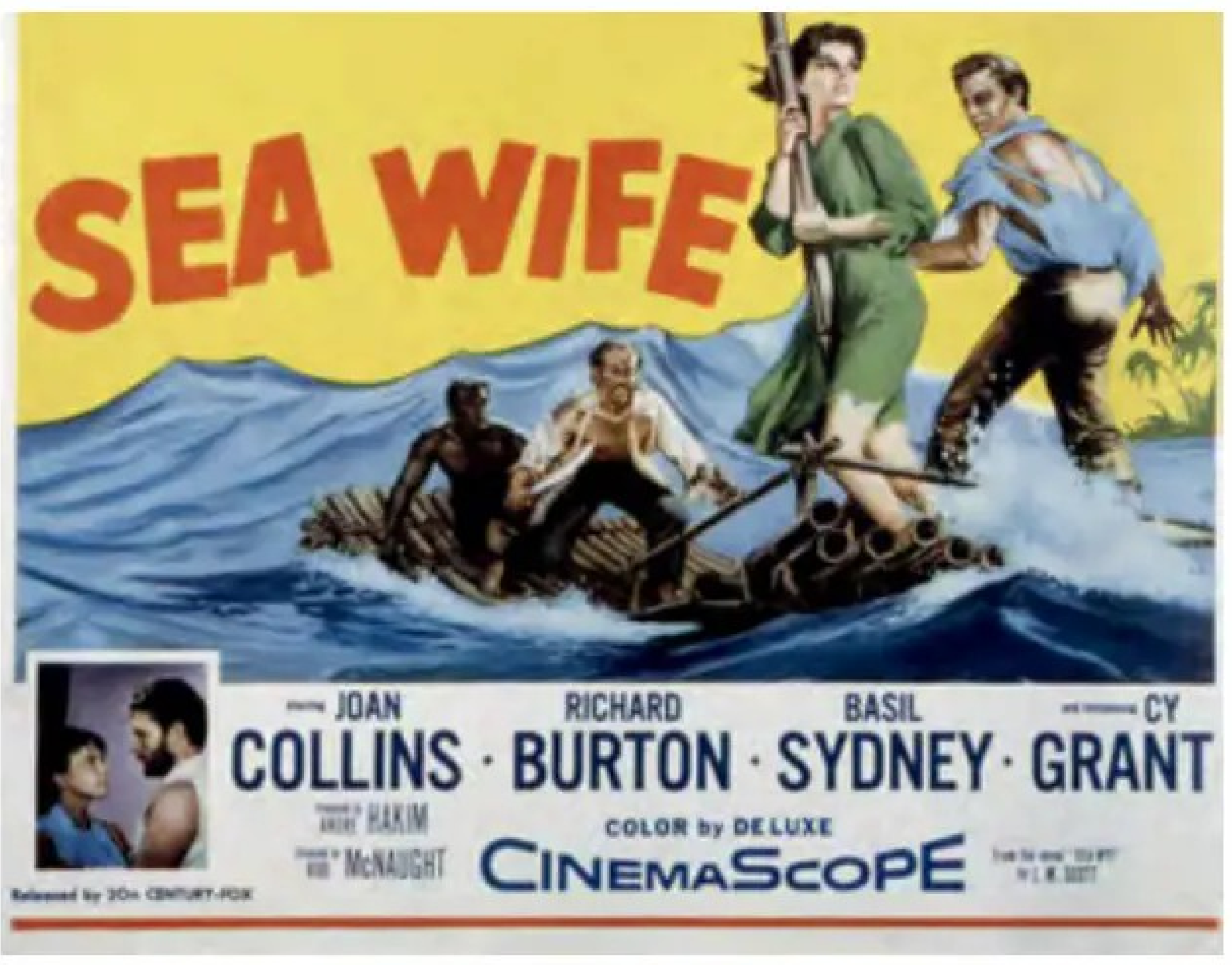
British and American POWs after Soviet troops arrived at the camp in Luckenwalde, where Cy was liberated. However, frustrated by Soviet inaction, he took it upon himself to leave the camp
US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS ARCHIVE

"TALLY-HO" BRIDGE
WARNING! KEEP CORRECT SPACING, OR BRIDGE WILL SINK!

British troops escort German POWs over a pontoon bridge stretching across the Elbe. Cy and his comrades attempted the same journey but were repeatedly blocked by Soviet guards
HULTON/GETTY

Luckenwalde was liberated by the Soviets on April 22, 1945. Even then there were problems with food and some of the subsequent post-war distrust and hostility between the Allies was already coming to the fore. Promises to be moved to British/American lines were constantly broken.

Frustrated, Cy opted to go his own way. He left the camp and travelled towards the US lines. He joined a group of Afro-American soldiers seeking to move back across the Elbe, but this took some time and some creativity on Cy's part to achieve. Trying to cross the Elbe proved difficult as the Soviets were proving increasingly more difficult: “We had tried every known crossing point along the Elbe, but the Russians were most uncooperative and always turned us away.”


SEA WIFE
JOAN COLLINS · RICHARD BURTON · BASIL SYDNEY · CY GRANT
COLOR by DE LUXE
CINEMASCOPE

In 1957, Cy co-starred in the war film Sea Wife, playing an ill-fated sailor nicknamed ‘Number Four’ LMPC/GETTY

Finally, at the last crossing point, they were allowed to cross. Cy had finally made it back behind friendly lines, and soon, to Britain.

Lawyer, actor, activist

POW life had furnished Cy with plenty of time to reflect on his life and the lot of others. This greatly influenced him, and post-war he began a long life of social activism, seeking justice for those most disadvantaged. He reflected: “Being a POW made me aware that warfare was indefensible and barbaric, even when it appeared it could be justified.” It would be, and perhaps still is, a controversial view for some, but for Cy, it provided motivation.

Cy first qualified as a barrister before he pursued a successful acting and singing career, becoming the first man of African descent to make regular appearances on British TV when, in the 1950s on the satirical *Tonight* show, he sang the news calypso style. In 1957, he starred alongside Richard Burton and Joan Collins in the

THE BLACK POW EXPERIENCE

Stephen Bourne reflects on the contrasting experiences of British/Commonwealth Black POWs during World War Two

Despite the numbers who fought, with very few exceptions, testimonies from Black POWs are hard to find and their stories generally unknown.

Ransford Boi is one of the earliest identified Black POWs. He was a seaman in the British Merchant Navy captured off Liberia in December 1939. Transferred to the Stalag XB camp at Sandbostel between Bremen and Hanover, he spent two years there before moving to another internment camp where there were about 30 other Black inmates.

Cyril Roberts, the son of George Roberts, the famed London Blitz fireman who originated from Trinidad, was captured at Dunkirk and remained a POW in Stalag 383 until he was liberated in 1945. Also captured at Dunkirk was Jamaican-born Patrick Nelson, a gay man, former ‘gentleman's valet’ and artist's model. He enlisted in 1940 and deployed with the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps to France. When the Allies were evacuated from Dunkirk, Patrick was injured in the fighting and captured. He remained a POW for the next four years.

Other than Cy Grant, perhaps the most prominent Black POW today is John ‘Johnny’ Smythe, who was interviewed in various journals and left detailed testimonies about his experiences. Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Johnny volunteered to serve in the RAF. In 1940 he travelled to Greenock, Scotland, for training and flew his first operational sortie in 1941. After nearly 18 months of flying as a navigator, he was promoted to flying officer. Johnny acknowledged that the selection of his crew was extremely important: “We were brothers in trouble, comrades in arms, and we needed to stick together and understand each other.”

Pilot Officer John Smythe, a Sierra Leonean RAF airman, barrister and future attorney general of Sierra Leone STEPHEN BOURNE/IWM CH10740

On the night of November 18, 1943, on his 27th mission, Smythe's luck ran out. He was the navigator aboard a Short Stirling III of 623 Squadron, one of 395 aircraft sent to attack Mannheim. The aircraft was crippled by anti-aircraft fire, and the crew was forced to abandon the stricken bomber.

Smythe hid in a barn but surrendered when the Germans discovered him. His captors were shocked to see a Black man who was also an officer. They could not reconcile this with the propaganda they had been indoctrinated with, that the Black man was sub-human. Smythe said they just stood there gazing. After a week in hospital, he was taken for interrogation. This was his first encounter with ‘the Swastika boys’, as he referred to them. When his interrogators realised that Johnny was not going to give up any information, he was reunited with his pilot and rear gunner and sent to a camp.

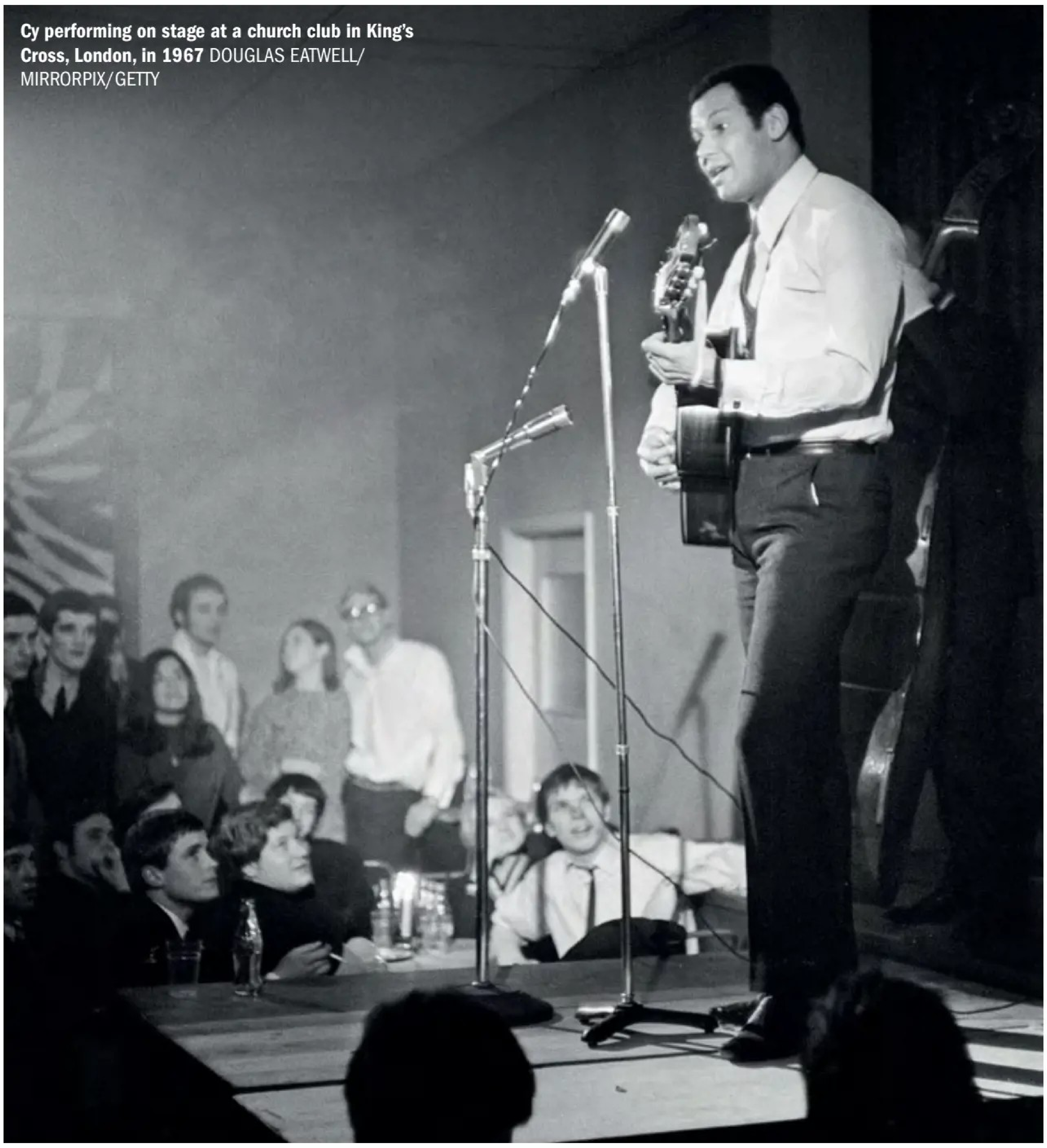
For 18 months they were prisoners in Stalag Luft 1, a camp for 9,000 Allied airmen in Barth, a small town on the Baltic Sea. It had opened as a camp for British officers in 1942, but US airmen began to arrive in 1943. On his arrival at the camp, Johnny was immediately introduced to the potential horrors of camp life when trigger-happy guards murdered several prisoners in front of him for no ostensible reason. Later, he wrote: “One day we found out that the Germans had taken away all the Jewish prisoners. There was talk of an incinerator being built just outside the camp in anticipation of a German victory. The effect on us was paralysing.”

At the camp, Smythe continued to shock the Germans. The guards were dumbstruck when they saw him in an RAF officer's uniform but fortunately did not treat him differently from the white prisoners. Johnny kept himself busy and enthusiastically joined the escape committee. He helped other prisoners to escape, but he couldn't break out himself. “I don't think a 6ft 5in tall Black man would've got very far,” he said. Then, in May 1945, “we woke up and, to our utter amazement and disbelief, there was not a single guard. They had abandoned their posts and fled.”

A few days later, with the camp was liberated by the Soviets, one of their officers embraced Smythe and gave him vodka.

The stories of Black women who were interned are much harder to find. In *Rosie's War – An Englishwoman's Escape from Occupied France*, Rosemary Say recalled her friendship with Ronka, a Nigerian. Say briefly described her as “tall, beautiful, haughty and silent”. Ronka was one of very few Black women interned by the Germans in Besançon in occupied France. Nothing more is known about her.

Stephen Bourne is a social historian and author. His 2020 book, Under Fire: Black Britain in Wartime 1939–45, draws on first-hand testimonies to tell the story of Britain's Black community during World War Two, shedding light on a wealth of experiences from evacuees to entertainers, government officials to POWs.


Cy performing on stage at a church club in King's Cross, London, in 1967 DOUGLAS EATWELL/ MIRRORPIX/GETTY

Bob McNaught war film *Sea Wife*, based on the James Maurice Scott novel *Sea-Wyf and Biscuit*. The film follows a group of survivors from a torpedoed British refugee ship sunk as it flees Singapore in 1942. Featuring racial distrust at the heart of the survival narrative, Cy played the ill-fated ship's purser, 'Number Four'.

He later had his own TV series, voiced Lieutenant Green in Gerry Anderson's 1967 series *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*, and starred in films and TV shows with actors such as Doug McClure, Peter Cushing and Roger Moore. He also featured on the cover of *Radio Times*.

However, Cold War Britain was a country divided socially, and race relations were at a low ebb. Politician Enoch Powell had made his infamous *Rivers of Blood* speech in April 1968. Race riots broke out in inner cities in the early 1980s. Cy readily admitted that his frustrations had led him to become "a very angry Black man". Yet, in the face of such division, and despite his anger at the ongoing injustices and intolerance, Cy wanted to challenge discrimination and improve race relations. He set up the Drum Arts Centre in London in 1974 to provide a national centre for African artistic talent which is considered to be a landmark institution in the development of black theatre. In the 1980s he was the Director of the Concord Multi-cultural Festivals which were designed to foster improved race relations.

Further, notwithstanding his distaste of war, he helped set-up an online archive to trace and commemorate West Indian aircrew who had fought in the war. He was determined their contributions be remembered. He was also a staunch supporter of the Bomber Command Memorial Appeal and while he did not live to see the unveiling of the Bomber Command monument in Green Park in 2012, he would have seen it as a fitting tribute to the 55,573 Bomber Command aircrew killed in the conflict, a number that included two of his crewmates.

> ***"Cy was honoured by Bomber Command at a ceremony in the House of Lords, proclaiming him as an 'inspirational example'"***

In November 2017, in a move to mark Cy's broad career, a Blue Plaque was unveiled at his home in Highgate where he had lived for 50 years before his death, aged 90, on February 13, 2010. After his death, Cy was honoured at a ceremony in the House of Lords, proclaiming him as an "inspirational example" of how those of all races fought side-by-side for freedom.

In his long life, Cy's gave much to Britain both during and after World War Two. To those who know of him, he remains a war hero, poet, musician, songwriter, broadcaster and actor of note. He stood for equal rights in the Britain and worked tirelessly to foster improved race relations during difficult times. His life was a string of incredible achievements, efforts that are worth acknowledgement both in the UK and his native Guyana.

The author thanks Cy Grant's family, and especially his daughter Sami, for their support and encouragement in telling the story of their father.

Although he died before it was unveiled, Cy was a supporter of the project to install a memorial dedicated to Bomber Command in London CHRIS HARRIS/UCG/GETTY

LACEY'S LAST

Soaring through Burmese skies, legendary Battle of Britain ace **'Ginger' Lacey** achieved his last victory 80 years ago this month

Words: **Tom Spencer**

On November 23, 1944, Squadron Leader James Harry 'Ginger' Lacey assumed command of 17 Squadron, RAF, flying Spitfire Mk.VIIIs at Sapam, south of Imphal. He noted his first impressions: "Morale on the squadron is excellent, although it appears to have spent too much time in Ceylon and tended to have become a little stale. This disappeared almost immediately, and we are now expectantly awaiting the appearance of the first Japanese aircraft of 17's second Far East operational tour."

One of the RAF's leading fighter pilots, Lacey was eager to be back in action. Born in Wetherby on February 1, 1917, Lacey was a trainee pharmacist who joined the RAFVR in 1937. By the time war erupted and he transferred to 501 Squadron in September 1939, he had become an instructor and accrued more than 1,000 flying hours. He became an ace during the Battle of France, experience that proved key during the Battle of Britain where he was the RAF's second-highest scoring ace of the battle. His tally included one of the He 111s that attacked Buckingham Palace, as well as two Bf 109s that he brought down without being noticed in his solo attack on a group of 12.

By the end of the pivotal battle, Lacey had amassed 23 victories – 18 during the Battle of Britain – and in November 1940 he was awarded the Bar to his DFM, followed by a Mention in Despatches in January 1941. Service as an instructor followed, then squadron command in the Far East.

Having taken command of 17 Squadron, Lacey would have to wait until 1945 before his wish came true. Yet, when he finally led his Squadron back to Burma, moving to Taukkyan and flying patrols over the Kalewa bridgehead across the River Chindwin, there was little sign of Japanese aircraft. Instead, the Squadron concentrated on ground attacks that began after noon on January 28, 1945, when Lacey led eight Spitfires to attack Japanese bunkers, then strafing troops until British units closed on and captured the position.

Good shooting

On February 3, Lacey led his squadron forward to Ywadon as the battle for central Burma reached its climax. In a series of brilliant manoeuvres, the British

Lacey, as a pilot officer, beneath the prop of his 501 Squadron Spitfire in 1941 501 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

Men of 17 Squadron erect tents after arriving at Ywadon on February 3, 1945 17 SQUADRON RECORDS

had outflanked the Japanese and were driving toward Meiktila as well as almost isolating the defenders at Mandalay. At Ywadon, all squadron personnel set to erecting tents and operations resumed the next morning. However, when the first of eight pairs of Spitfires got airborne for patrols the Ywadon-Monywa area they met no enemy aircraft.

The Squadron finally encountered the Japanese on February 18, when Pilot Officer Bob Connell was flight testing Spitfire Mk.VIII 'YB-T'. Flying at 28,000ft, he shot down a Mitsubishi Ki-46 *Dinah* from the 81st Sentai flown by Rikugun-Chūi [Lieutenant] Hono.

Taking off at 0725hrs on February 19, Lacey, at the controls of his regular aircraft 'YB-A', led Warrant Officer Jim Sharkey RAAF as Red Section, with Pilot Officer F Irvine and Flight Sergeant Jack Gardner as Blue Section, on what was already 17 Squadron's third patrol of the morning. Flying in good visibility, they set up in the Mandalay area and at 0815hrs Sharkey spotted a formation of up to 12 Nakajima Ki-43 *Oscars*.

With his usual skill, Lacey positioned his formation behind them, setting up a rolling attack on the second aircraft of the rear section. He later described the action: "The enemy aircraft started a gentle turn to starboard and not evasive action. Allowing just over one ring deflection, and from an angle of about 10°, I fired a one-second burst at a range of about 150 yards. Three cannon strikes were seen on the cockpit, which disintegrated the hood.

"The enemy aircraft turned slowly on its back and dived vertically towards the ground. We followed it down to 12,000ft but broke off when jumped by another *Oscar* from above. This aircraft was evaded by a vertical climb to 18,000ft. On looking down I observed a large cloud of dust and smoke rising from the ground below. The remaining enemy started to weave violently as soon as the attack was commenced. The weaves finally became so big that the formation made practically no forward headway, and it became almost impossible to attack any section without coming under the guns of another."

'Ginger' Lacey was credited with an Oscar II destroyed, probably that flown by Gunsō [Sergeant] Kadokura of the 64th Sentai. Remarkably, to bring down his opponent, Lacey had fired just nine rounds from his 20mm cannon. It was his only victory over the Japanese and was his 28th – and last – overall.

"Keep cracking!"

As Lacey closed his tally, almost simultaneously, Irvine closed in to within 350yds of an *Oscar* as it made a slow starboard turn. Seeing his opportunity, he opened fire, spotting hits all over the cockpit and wing root area, whereupon the Japanese

"Remarkably, Lacey had fired just nine rounds from his 20mm cannon. It was his only victory over the Japanese"

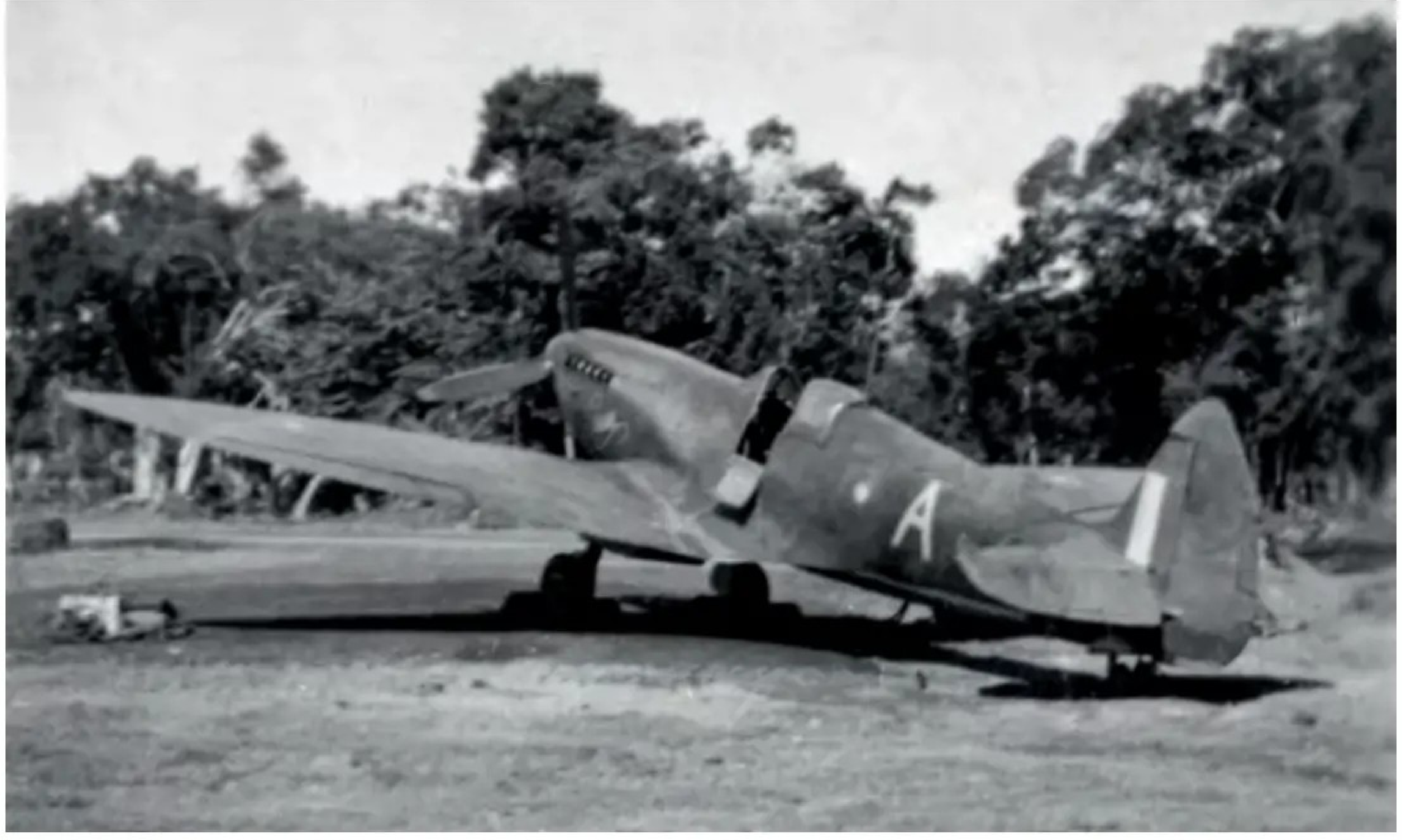
Spitfire Mk.VIII 'YB-M' is covered by a Bofors gun as it is serviced at Sapam in November 1944 just after 'Ginger' Lacey arrived to command 17 Squadron VIA J D R RAWLINGS

One of 17 Squadron's Spitfire Mk.VIIIs, YB-J, which could claim one of the unit's final victories over Burma C DOBSON VIA P R ARNOLD fighter turned over onto its back out and lost control. The aircraft was credited destroyed.

The action was not quite over, as an hour later Flight Lieutenant E Marshall claimed a probable. He likely did shoot down the enemy aircraft, but as he did not see it go down, he was unable to claim it destroyed. Later that day, Lacey received a message from Group Captain Don Finlay, the commanding officer of 906 Wing. It read: "Congratulations on two days good work – keep cracking!"

However, the Japanese Army Air Force was essentially spent and encounters with its aircraft were increasingly rare. It was not until April 29, during a brief fight near Toungoo, that Connell secured his squadron's next kill, shooting down a Ki-84 *Hayate* flown by Gunsō Tomihiro Kondo of the 55th Sentai. It was the fifth victory for 17 Squadron under 'Ginger' Lacey's command tenure, and, significantly, the RAF's final victory over Burma.

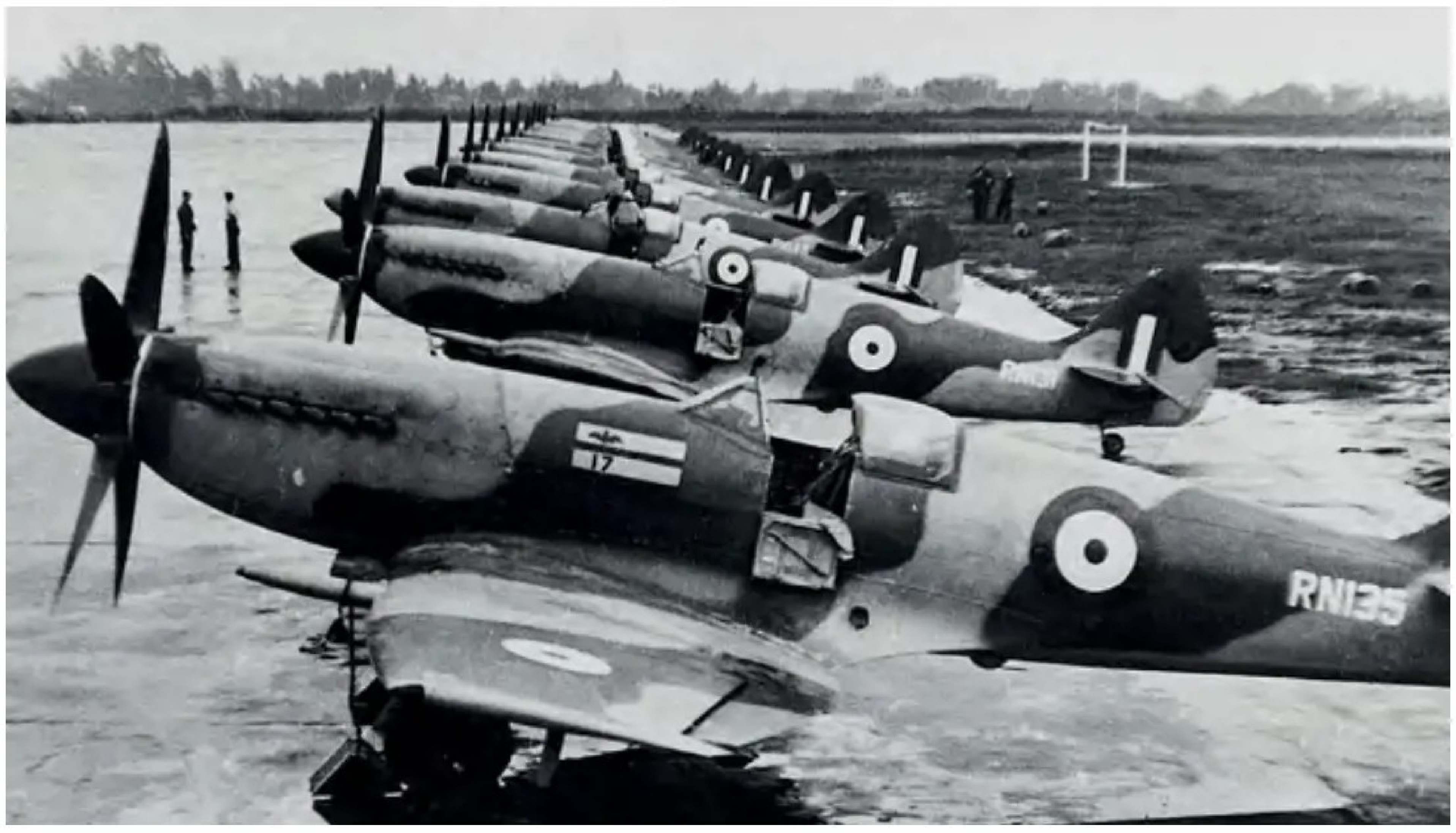
Lacey remained in command of 17 Squadron until the end of the war, when he moved with it and its new Griffon-engined Spitfire Mk.XIVs, to Malaya, arriving via the aircraft carrier HMS *Trumpeter*. On March 1, 1946, he led the Squadron to Japan to join the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Once again it was ferried by carrier and on arrival established at Miho. From here, on April 30, Lacey flew the first Spitfire patrol over Japan. He relinquished command soon after and returned to Britain already a hero. BW



RIGHT: **Spitfire Mk.VIII 'A', seen in Ceylon before the move to Sapam where it became Lacey's usual mount and in which he flew in his only combat with the Japanese** AFMNZ

MIDDLE LEFT: **Squadron Leader Lacey (left) is congratulated on claiming his 28th victory by his wingman, Warrant Officer Jim Sharkey at Ywadon just after the action** VIA D HEALEY

MIDDLE RIGHT: **Pilot Officer Irvine (left) led Blue Section on the day Lacey claimed his final victory. Pilot Officer Connell (right), shot down a *Dinah* on February 18** VIA D HEALEY



BELOW: **When 17 Squadron moved to Japan, Spitfire Mk.XIV RN135 belonged to Squadron Leader Lacey, and although not visible here, at one stage carried his 'tally', including a single Japanese flag** VIA D HEALEY

OLYMPIC OFFICER

Group Captain Don Finlay DFC, AFC, the CO of 906 Wing, of which 17 Squadron became part of, was a notable pilot in his own merit. A successful Battle of Britain pilot, Finlay survived being shot down over Ramsgate and claimed four destroyed, plus two shared destroyed and three-and-a-half damaged, qualifying him as an ace.

Finlay commissioned in the RAF in 1935, serving in 17 Squadron and then 54 Squadron – which he commanded. He later led 41 and 608 Squadrons and served as the engineering officer for 11 Group before leading 906 Wing in the Far East. He died in 1970, aged 60.

However, he may be best known as a sportsman. A three-time Olympian, Finlay completed in the 1932 Los Angeles, 1936 Berlin and the 1948 London games. An excellent 110-metre hurdler, although he fell in the heats in 1948, he placed third in Los Angeles (beating Lord Burghley, with the gold won by George Saling, who broke the world record in his semi-final). Finlay upgraded his bronze to silver in Berlin, where his time of 14.4 seconds would have won gold and set the world record in 1932, but he lost by 0.2 seconds to the new world record holder, Forrest Towns.

Finlay could add to his medal count a gold in the 120-yard hurdles at the 1934 London British Empire Games, and had he completed in the cancelled 1940 Olympics he may have won gold, as his form continued with a gold at the 1938 European Championships in Paris. As an aside, fellow British hurdler John Thorton came fifth in the 1936 Berlin race. During World War Two, he became a major in the Seaforth Highlanders, fighting at El Alamein and in Sicily. He was killed in Normandy on August 18, 1944.

Olympian and RAF Group Captain Don Finlay in the cockpit as OC 906 Wing C F SHORES

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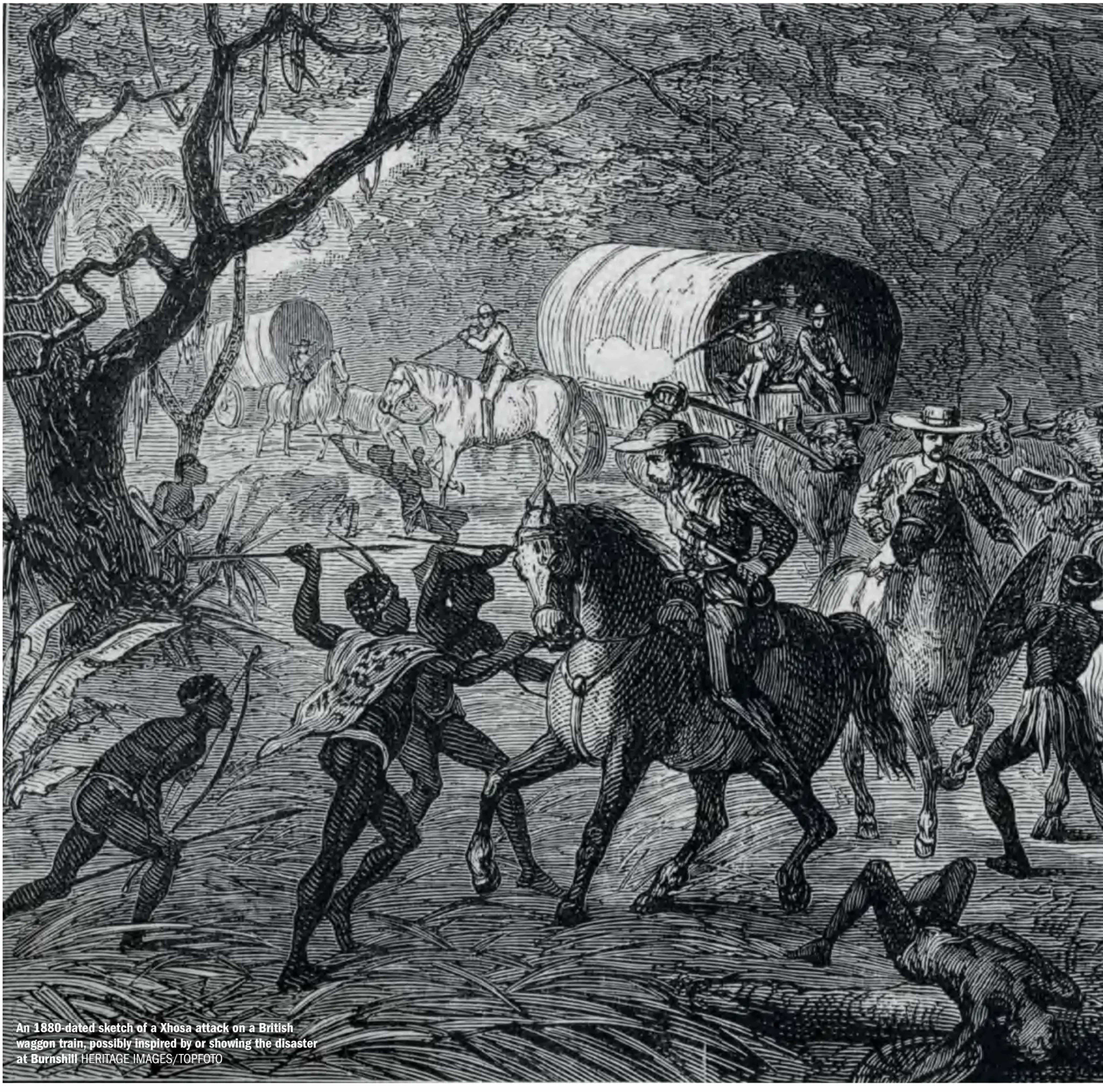
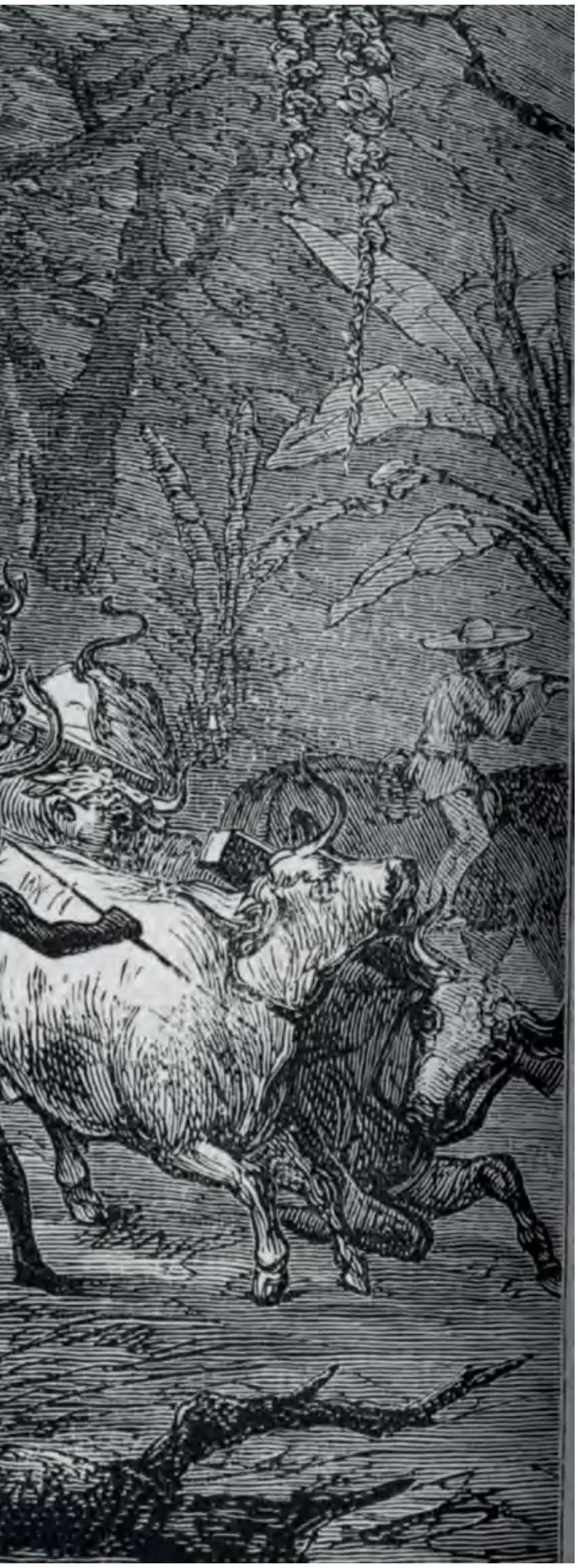
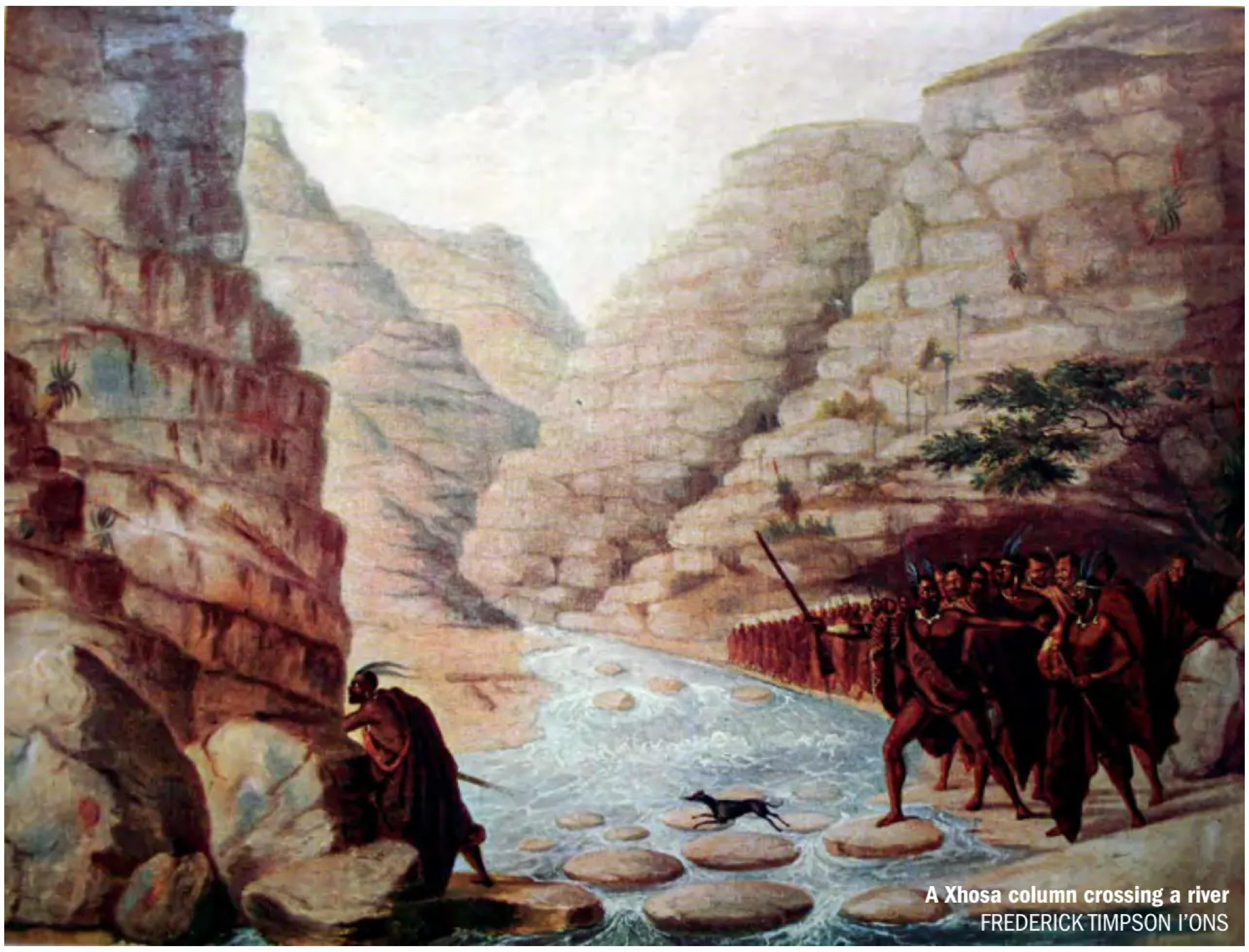
ROAD TO DISASTER



An 1880-dated sketch of a Xhosa attack on a British waggon train, possibly inspired by or showing the disaster at Burnshill HERITAGE IMAGES/TOPFOTO

In a conflict known as the 'War of the Axe', a British waggon train encountered more than tough terrain as it ranged from Burnshill in South Africa. **Gerry van Tonder** details one of the greatest forgotten defeats inflicted on the British Army





A Xhosa column crossing a river
FREDERICK TIMPSON I'ONS

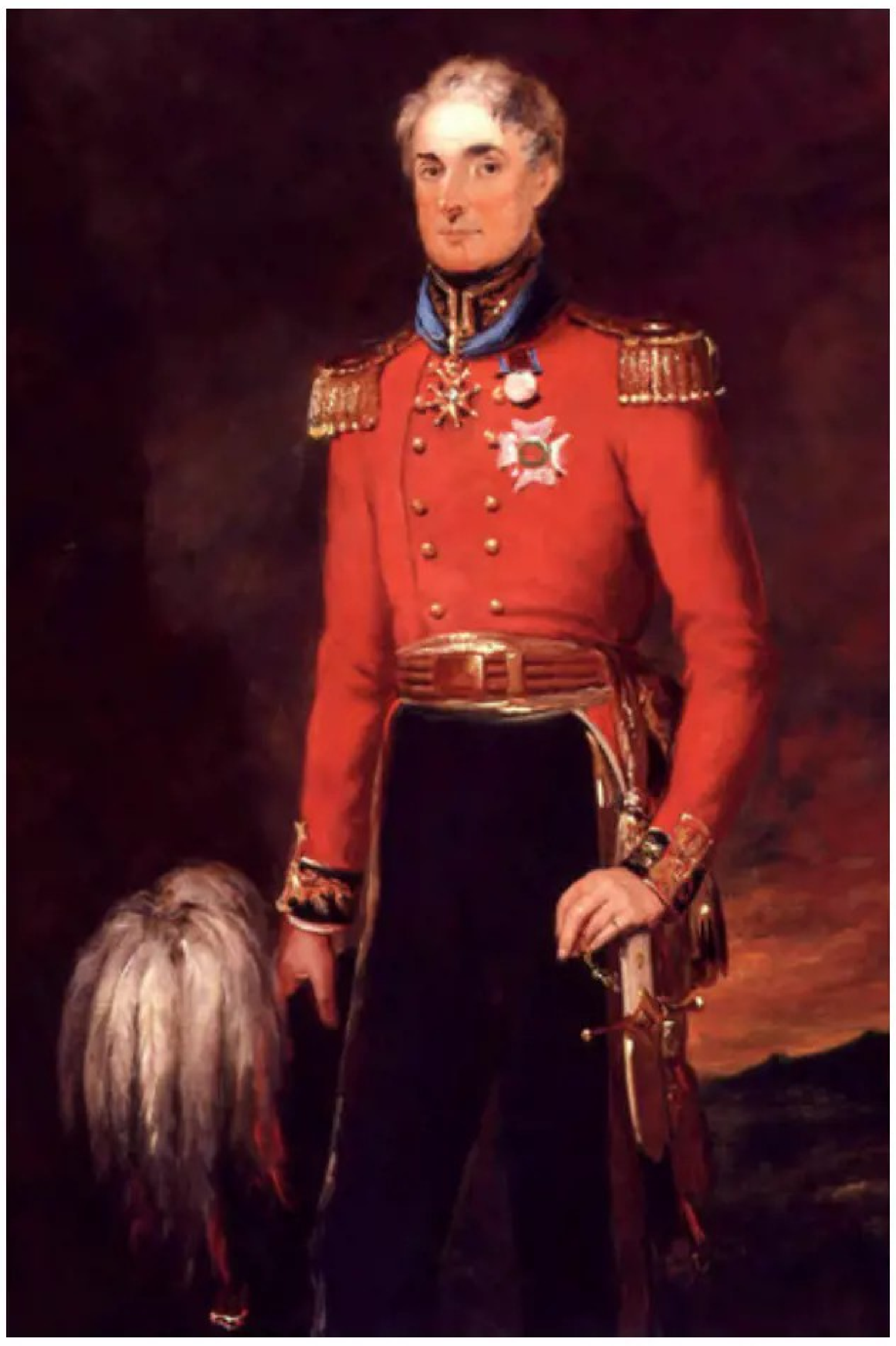
On the afternoon of April 17, 1846, on the eastern frontier of the British Cape Colony in southern Africa, an ungainly, three-mile-long British supply convoy of 125 waggons, drawn by 1,750 oxen, departed from Burnshill. Before long, it was overwhelmed by a force of indigenous Xhosa warriors. In what was described as "one of the most inglorious episodes in the history of the British Army in the 19th century", the Xhosa stripped the invading army of the bulk of its supplies and provisions, as well as its means of transporting goods.

Between 1779 and 1878, successive Dutch and British administrations in Cape Town engaged in nine military campaigns with indigenous clans in the Eastern Cape frontier in what is commonly referred to as the Xhosa or Cape Frontier Wars.

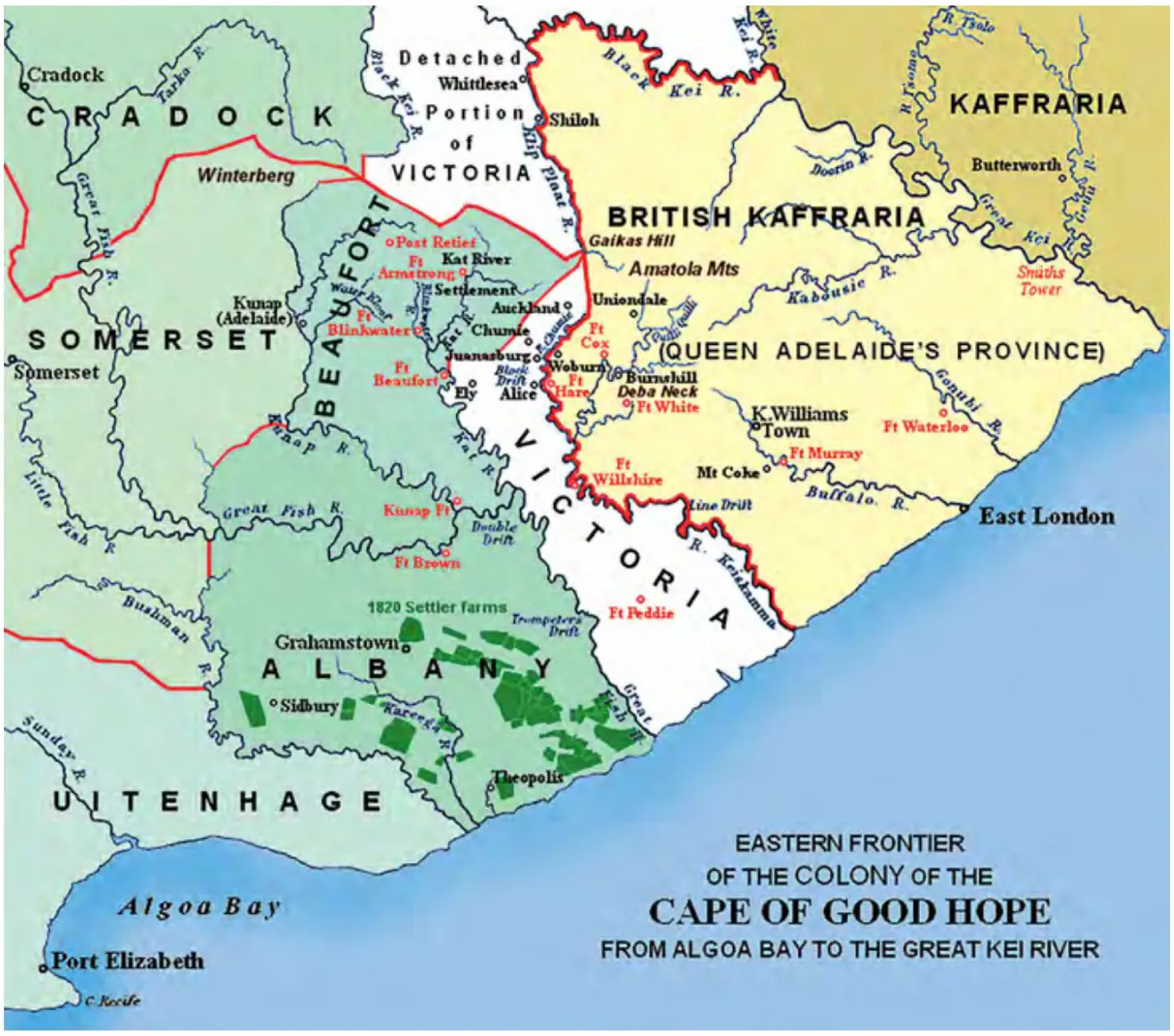
Cattle and its ownership were (and still are) at the very heart of Xhosa culture, revered and protected as the ultimate symbol of masculine prowess. But large herds demanded huge tracts of sustainable pastureland and, as European settlements spread ever eastward, more and more Xhosa land was expropriated and annexed. It was inevitable that conflict would result.

The seventh of these conflicts, referred to as the Amatola War or the 'War of the Axe' due to its trigger – the arrest of a Xhosa for theft of an axe – was fought from 1846 to 1847. By this time, Mgolombane Sandile Ngqika of the Rharhabe (right-hand) House ruled the part of the Xhosa kingdom west of the Kei river. Born in Burnshill, Sandile had, while still a young boy, succeeded his father Ngqika, after whom the entire Ngqika clan of Xhosa was named. Failing to master the Xhosa alveolar click represented by the letter 'q' in Ngqika, the colonial written and oral interpretation 'Gaika' was generally applied throughout. South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela, was of the Xhosa Ixhiba (left-hand) House.

At this time, the British garrison in Cape Colony only comprised the 7th (The Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, the 27th (Inniskilling) Regiment of Foot, the 1st Battalion, 45th (The 1st



Appointed Cape Governor in 1843, General Sir Peregrine Maitland GCB, had commanded the 1st Brigade of Guards at the Battle of Waterloo with such distinction that he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in 1815 WILLIAM SALTER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Kat River
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Auckland
Chumie
Uniondale
Kunap (Adelaide)
SOMERSET
Somerset
BEAUFORT
Ft Blinkwater
Juanasburg
Woburn
Ft Cox
Burnshill
Deba Neck
Ft White
Ft Beaufort
Ely
Alice
Ft Hare
(QUEEN ADELAIDE'S PROVINCE)
K.Williams Town
Ft Waterloo
Ft Murray
Mt Coke
Ft Wiltshire
Line Drift
Buffalo R.
East London
Smiths Tower
Kunap Ft
Double Drift
Ft Brown
VICTORIA
1820 Settler farms
Trumpeters Drift
Ft Peddie
Grahamstown
ALBANY
Sidbury
Theopolis
UITENHAGE
Algoa Bay
Port Elizabeth
C Recife
EASTERN FRONTIER
OF THE COLONY OF THE
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE
FROM ALGOA BAY TO THE GREAT KEI RIVER

ABOVE: **During the 19th century, vast tracts of Xhosa land were absorbed into the British Cape Colony. A proliferation of forts characterised the eastern advances of the colonists. The Burnshill Mission Station was just southeast of Fort Cox in Queen Adelaide's Province** JMK

LEFT: **Despite his young age and leg disability, Chief Sandile Ngqika employed unconventional tactics against British forces unaccustomed to the operational environment of the Amathole Mountains and surrounds.**

Nottinghamshire) Regiment of Foot and two battalions of the 91st (Argyllshire) Regiment of Foot. Added to this strength was the exclusively mounted Cape Mounted Riflemen (CMR), a mixed-race corps of cavalry.

Not only did the administration underestimate the colony's defence needs, but its logistics systems were wholly inadequate for the distances and terrain involved. Arguably, though, the greatest shortcoming was deploying troops only trained and equipped for European standards of warfare. When the Dragoons arrived in Cape Town on July 14, 1843, the unit's 23 officers and 309 other ranks brought with them 83 wives, 78 children and 44 foxhounds.

Amathole altercation

Tensions were already high on both sides due to British encroachment on Xhosa land and reprisal cattle raids on settler farms. Areas such as Queen Adelaide Province had been annexed, forts and garrisons established over the boundary inside Sandile's territory and the Cape's border re-established at Keiskamma River. With the dawning of 1846, the astute 25-year-old Sandile had become a determined activist against

HOT OFF THE PRESS

News of the disaster at Burnshill soon spread, and many commentators were scathing in their summations. The *South African Commercial Advertiser* – a Cape Town-based newspaper and South Africa's first independent – dominated print media in the Cape Colony at the time, and on June 2, 1846, its editor, John Fairbairn, published the following:

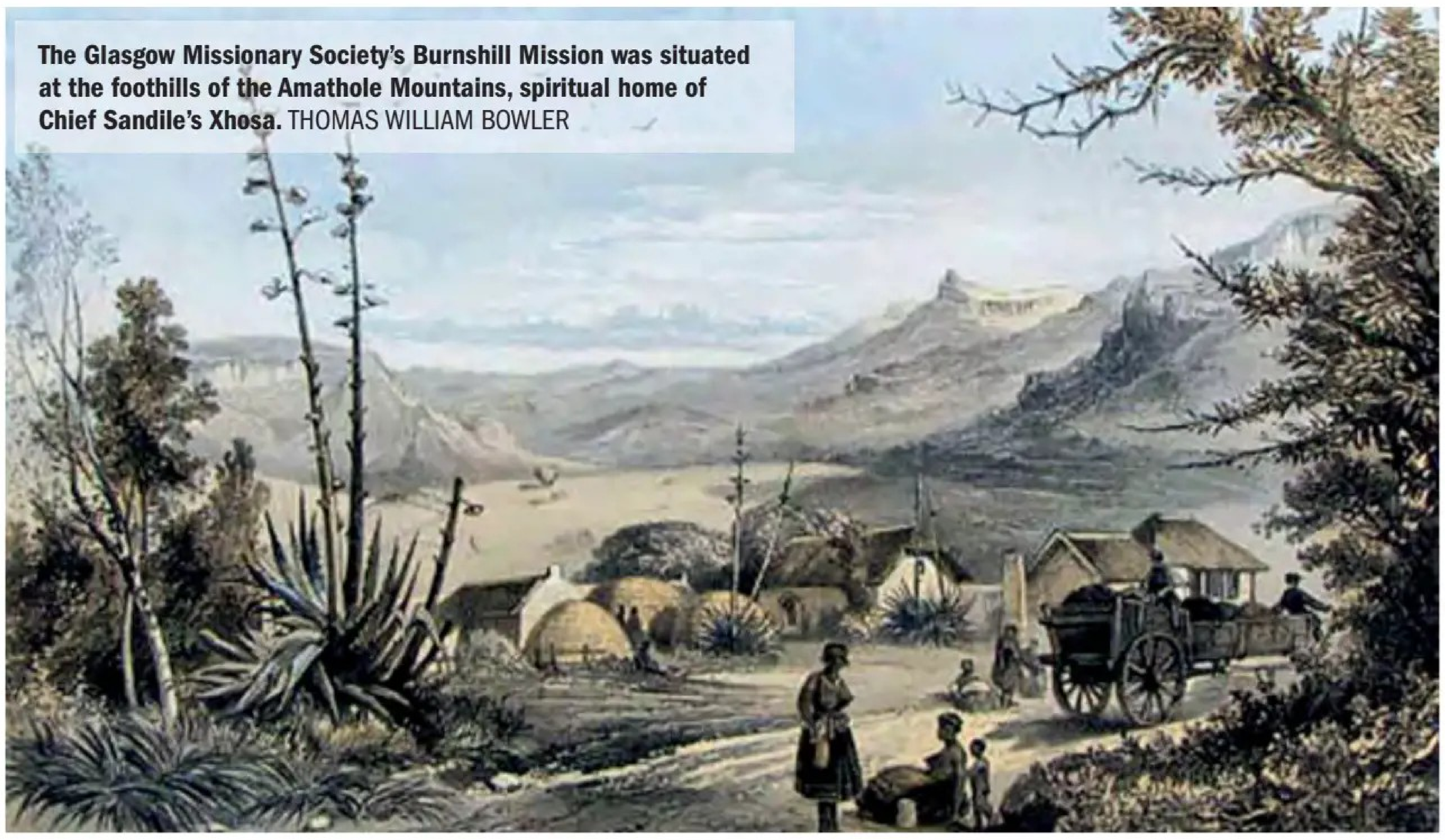
"It is impossible to repress the feelings of disappointment and disdain at the conduct of several military chiefs. They have failed in all their attacks; whenever assaulted they have been discomfited. But in strict justice it must be considered that this sort of service is evidently new to them; that cavalry has been called to act where cavalry action is as impossible as in the sea, or in a morass; and that in sending trains of waggons through the defiles of a hostile country – but no, there is no excuse, even in the imagination, for Burnshill and Trumpetter's Drift; they are blots, and that is all that charity can allow.

"Nothing of this sort must happen again, or judgment must ascend to headquarters. In the whole campaign of 1833, Colonel Smith never lost a waggon. He knew their value in a military point of view; and if any officer had reported to him that his party had returned without a wound, but with the loss of all waggons, Colonel Smith would most likely have shot him on the spot."

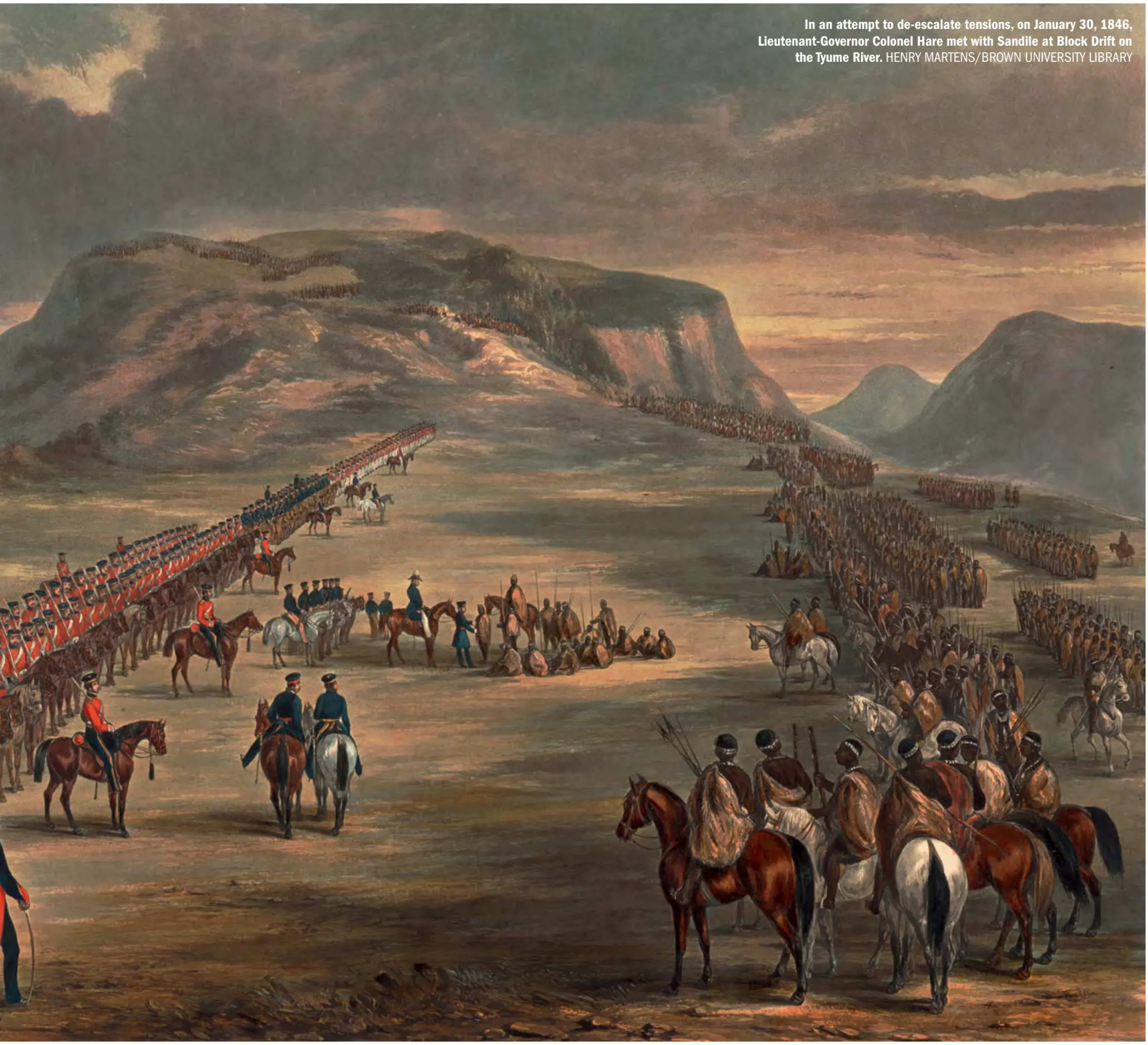
such encroachment, taking up his father's mantle of resistance by amassing a significant army, many of its warriors armed with British 'Brown Bess' land pattern muskets.

The British had laid out an extensive series of roads and forts, centred on King William's Town, the main pivot for this grid of power in and around the Amathole Mountains. The town was about 14 miles south of the foothills, on the banks of the Buffalo River, which provided protection against assault from the high ground.

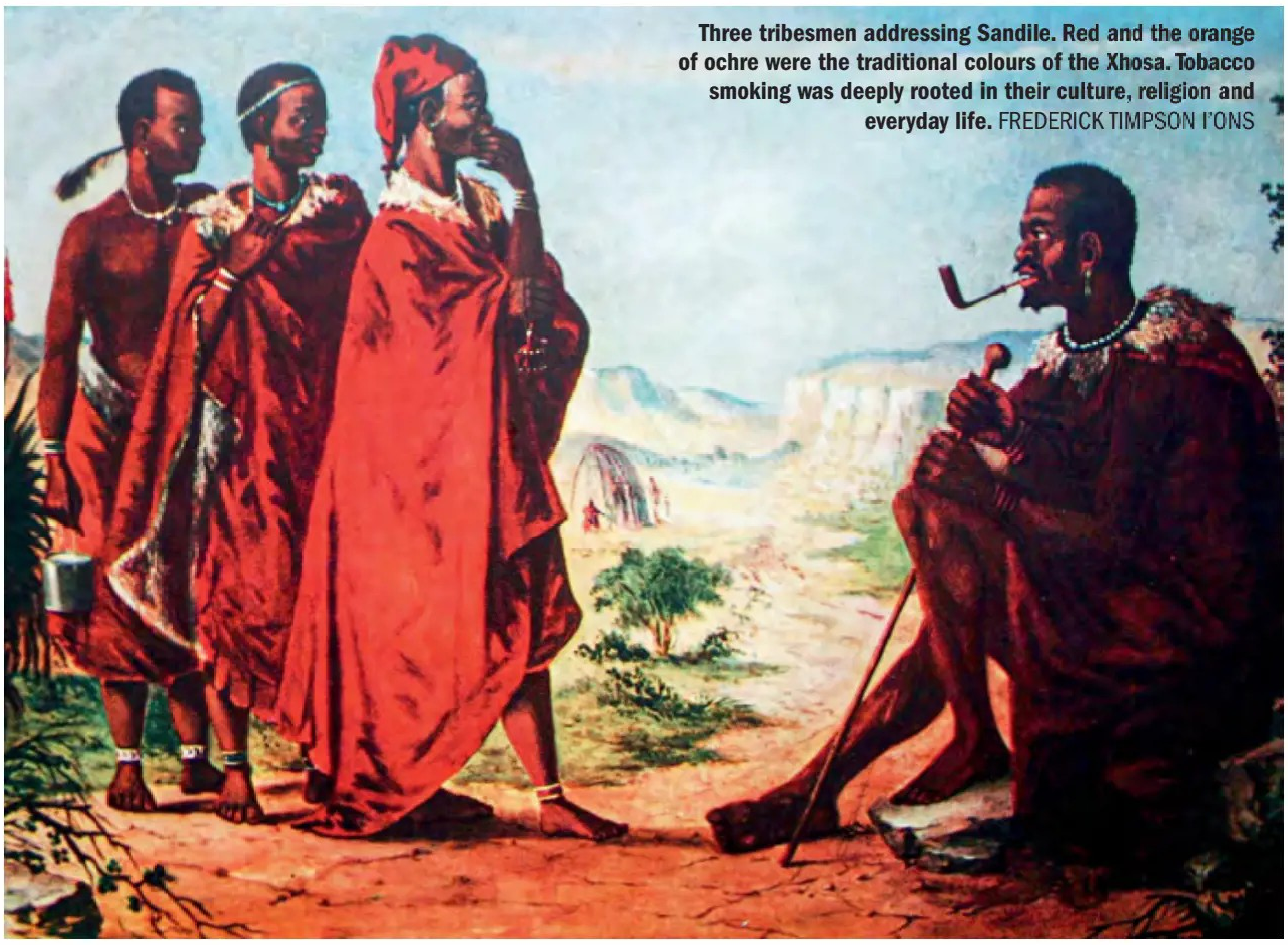
It was the downhill Boma Pass-Keiskamma River axis that most troubled the British military. It also extended upwards into the Amathole Mountains to a point known as Keiskamma Hoek, the source of the Keiskamma, where a



The Glasgow Missionary Society's Burnshill Mission was situated at the foothills of the Amathole Mountains, spiritual home of Chief Sandile's Xhosa. THOMAS WILLIAM BOWLER



In an attempt to de-escalate tensions, on January 30, 1846, Lieutenant-Governor Colonel Hare met with Sandile at Block Drift on the Tyume River. HENRY MARTENS/BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



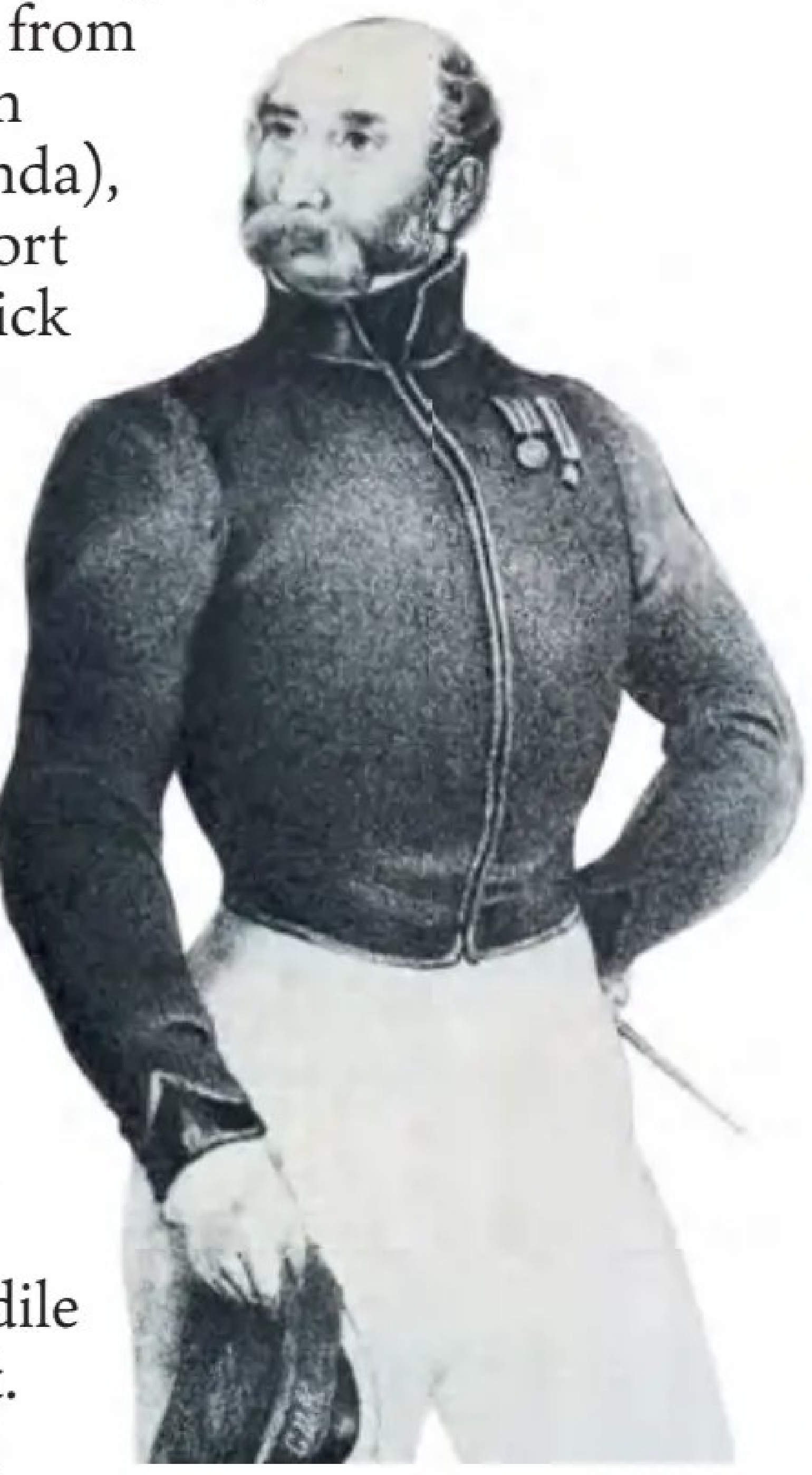
Three tribesmen addressing Sandile. Red and the orange of ochre were the traditional colours of the Xhosa. Tobacco smoking was deeply rooted in their culture, religion and everyday life. FREDERICK TIMPSON I'ONS

mission station called Uniondale was located. To the south was the deserted Glasgow Missionary Society's Burnshill Mission, which had been established at the base of the Amathole Mountains in 1831. The station was named after John Burns, minister of the Barony Church, Glasgow, and one of the founders of the society. It was destroyed in 1851.

Early in January 1846, Sandile had an altercation with storekeeper Thomas MacLachlan, in which the hapless white man was slapped by the chief who also, in an open display of provocation and defiance, helped himself to a few items of little value. Within weeks, the British had crossed at Block Drift on the Tyume (Chumie) River border between the colony and the Xhosa to site a new fort. It was named Fort Hare after the Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Division of the Cape of Good Hope, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Hare, commanding the 27th (Inniskilling) Regiment of Foot. (In the distant future, Fort Hare, just east of the town of Alice, became an elite university of the same name. The institution was favoured by African independence movements, with its alumni including Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Desmond Tutu, Seretse Khama, Julius Nyerere and Robert Mugabe.)

Criminal catalyst

Sandile, incensed at the uninvited intrusion at Block Drift, gave the British 24 hours to withdraw. Half companies from the 27th and 91st were immediately rushed to Block Drift from Post Victoria and Fort Beaufort, respectively, to protect Native Commissioner Charles Stretch's life and property at Lovedale.

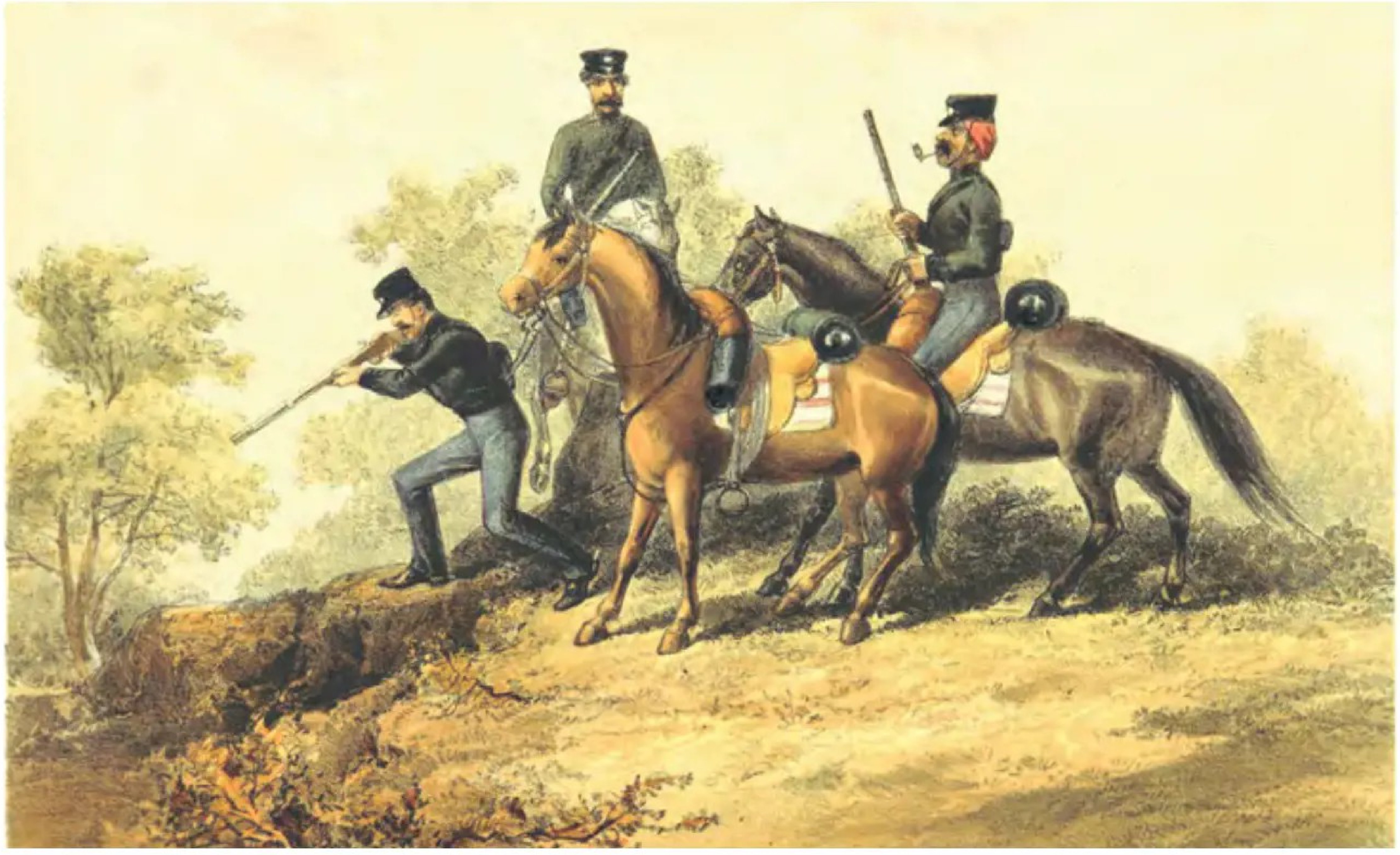


LEFT: **Serving as 'Commandant of the Frontier' and Colonel Commandant of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, Peninsular and Waterloo veteran Lieutenant-Colonel Somerset commanded the ill-fated Burnshill task force** CAPE ARCHIVES

As a matter of urgency, Hare hurried from Grahamstown (now Makhanda), stopping at Fort Beaufort to pick up an escort of two squadrons of the 7th Dragoons and two Royal Artillery six-pounder field guns. On January 30, Hare and 250 soldiers faced off Sandile at Block Drift. An estimated 5,000 Xhosa warriors outflanked the jittery Redcoats, and Hare ordered the two field guns to be charged. However, as belligerent as the Xhosa may have appeared, there was no call from Sandile to attack. Employing tactics of deliberate procrastination, Sandile, in no mood for compromise, demanded the immediate withdrawal of all British troops from the border area.

The stalemate ended late in the afternoon when the Xhosa withdrew, discharging their firearms into the air. Bizarrely, Hare saw the meeting as a non-event, an act of bravado, brought on by the inexperienced young Xhosa chief. He failed to interpret the danger in which the confrontation had placed his command. Much to his chagrin at Sandile's perceived impertinence, Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland issued a warning to settlers to prepare for conflict.

In March, the actions of an inebriated Xhosa tribesman precipitated the Seventh Cape Frontier War when he pilfered a four-penny axe from a trader's store. The man was arrested, handcuffed and despatched to Grahamstown under a 12-man guard. However, the party was ambushed at Mildenhall's Kloof and the prisoner freed. A Khoekhoe nomad (historically known as Hottentots) prisoner, to whom the Xhosa thief was bound, was killed in the melee. In what many described as a cause célèbre, Hare, taking such a localised incident as a personal reflection on his honour and integrity, declared war on Sandile on March 21. His impulsive

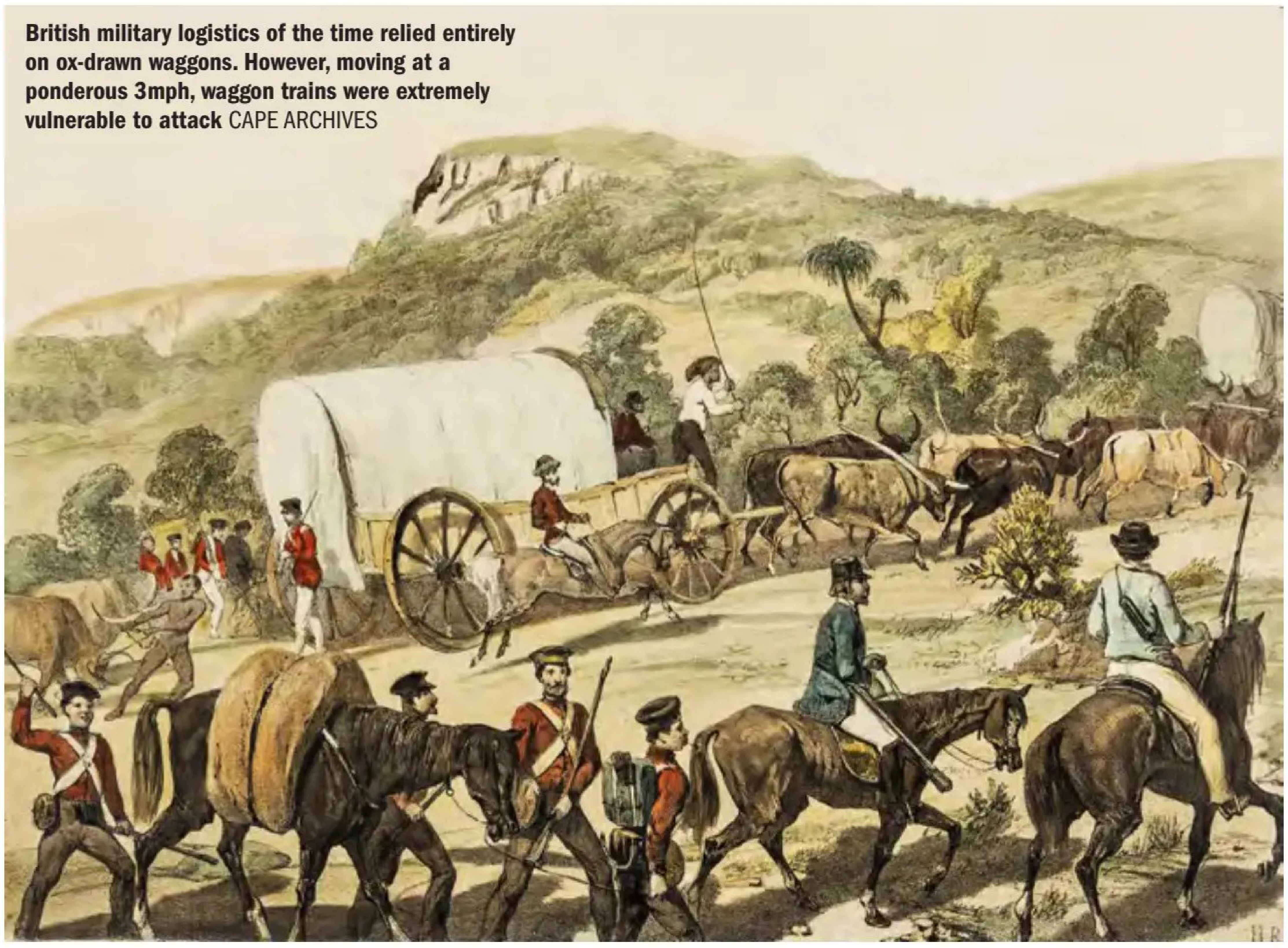


BELOW: **Imperial cavalry was largely ineffective in the mountainous terrain and dense vegetation of Xhosa territory, but with their local knowledge and experience, the Cape Mounted Riflemen fared better** THOMAS LUCAS/BRITISH LIBRARY decision, sanctioned by Maitland, was to last two years and cost Britain three million pounds.

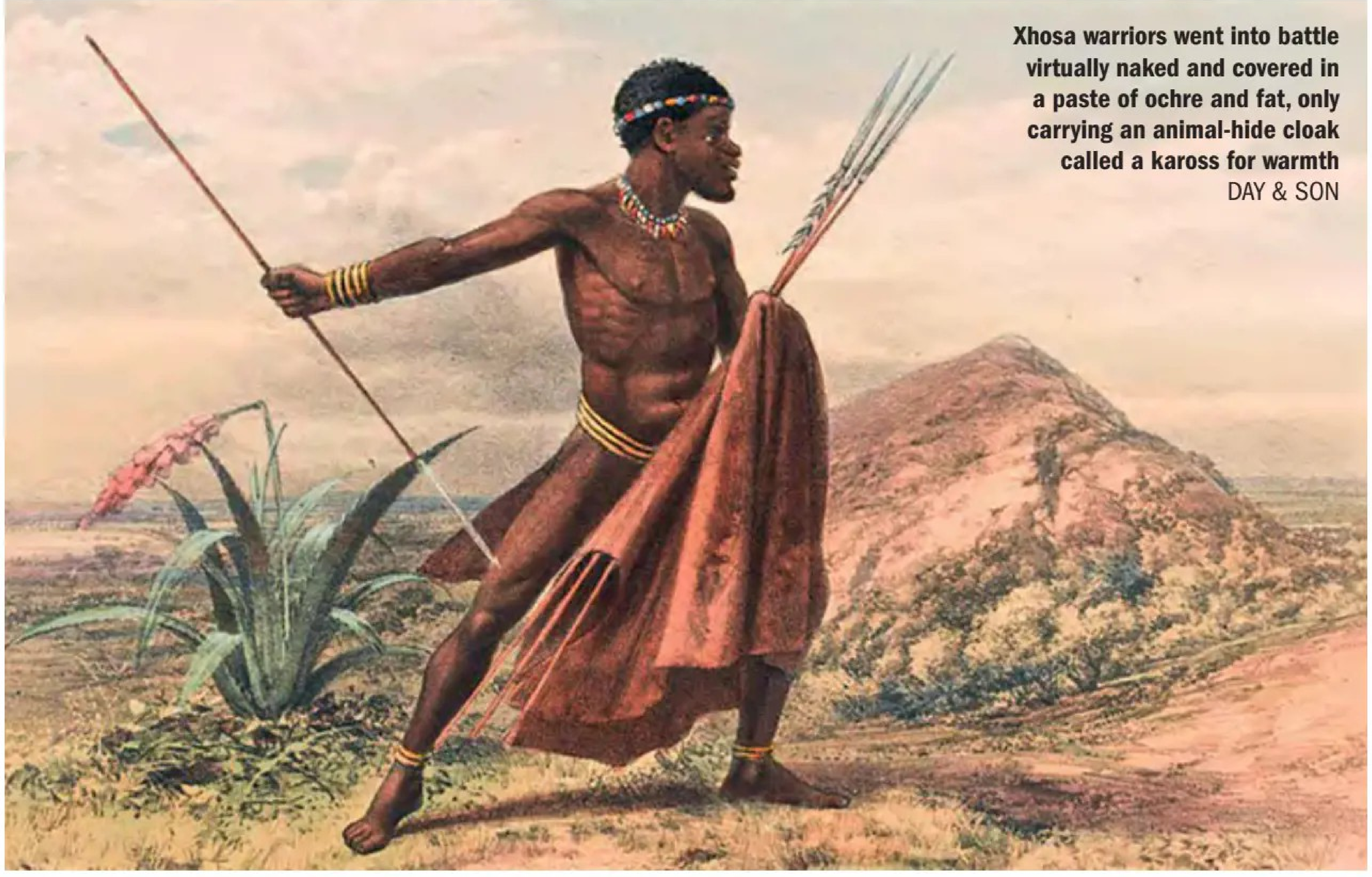
Not much to muster

The British presence in the colony was woefully inadequate. The combined strengths of the 27th, the 1st and Reserve Battalions of the 91st numbered only 994 soldiers, while the 7th Dragoons contributed 337 in three squadrons. The CMR mustered 400 men, and small numbers were added from artillery and engineer detachments. Irregular units were assembled from among the Xhosa's tribal arch-enemies, the Fingos, white settler militia and Boer kommandos. Among the Khoekhoe settlements in the Kat River valley, Captain William Sutton (CMR) mustered two mounted troops of 50 men each and 180 infantrymen led by mixed-race Field Cornet Andries Botha.

On April 10, Maitland arrived in Grahamstown with 80 soldiers of the 27th under Lieutenant-Colonel Montague Johnstone and a Royal Artillery detachment with two field pieces. The next day, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Somerset's expeditionary force of three columns crossed the Tyume River, then the Keiskamma. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Richardson, commander of the 7th Dragoons, marched from Fort Peddie while Captain Sutton travelled from Eland's Post at the Kat River with the Khoekhoe irregulars. Somerset advanced from Post Victoria with his own CMR regiment and four companies of the 91st. Eldest son of former Cape Governor Lord Charles Somerset and a veteran of the Peninsular War and Waterloo, Somerset served with the CMR throughout the Frontier Wars.



British military logistics of the time relied entirely on ox-drawn waggons. However, moving at a ponderous 3mph, waggon trains were extremely vulnerable to attack CAPE ARCHIVES



Xhosa warriors went into battle virtually naked and covered in a paste of ochre and fat, only carrying an animal-hide cloak called a kaross for warmth DAY & SON

POETIC ENDING

In 1903, revered Xhosa poet Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi immortalised the Burnshill victory in Xhosa verse. The poem, *Isidumbu sikaxhanti* (The Grave of the King), was later split into two parts and published in Izwi Labantu (The Voice of the People), a Xhosa-language newspaper. Mqhayi was the paper's sub-editor in addition to being a historian, poet and essayist. In part, the poem reads:

"We have a river,
A river of great strength.
A river that served the Xhosa nation
Without fail, year after year.
Its mouth is in the Amathole Mountains
Where young calves are bred and raised;
The white people know it,
Its name is iXesi.
Here we fought the white man.
He routed our forces at Mgwangqa;
Then we pursued him to Burnshill
And in panic his forces ran away."

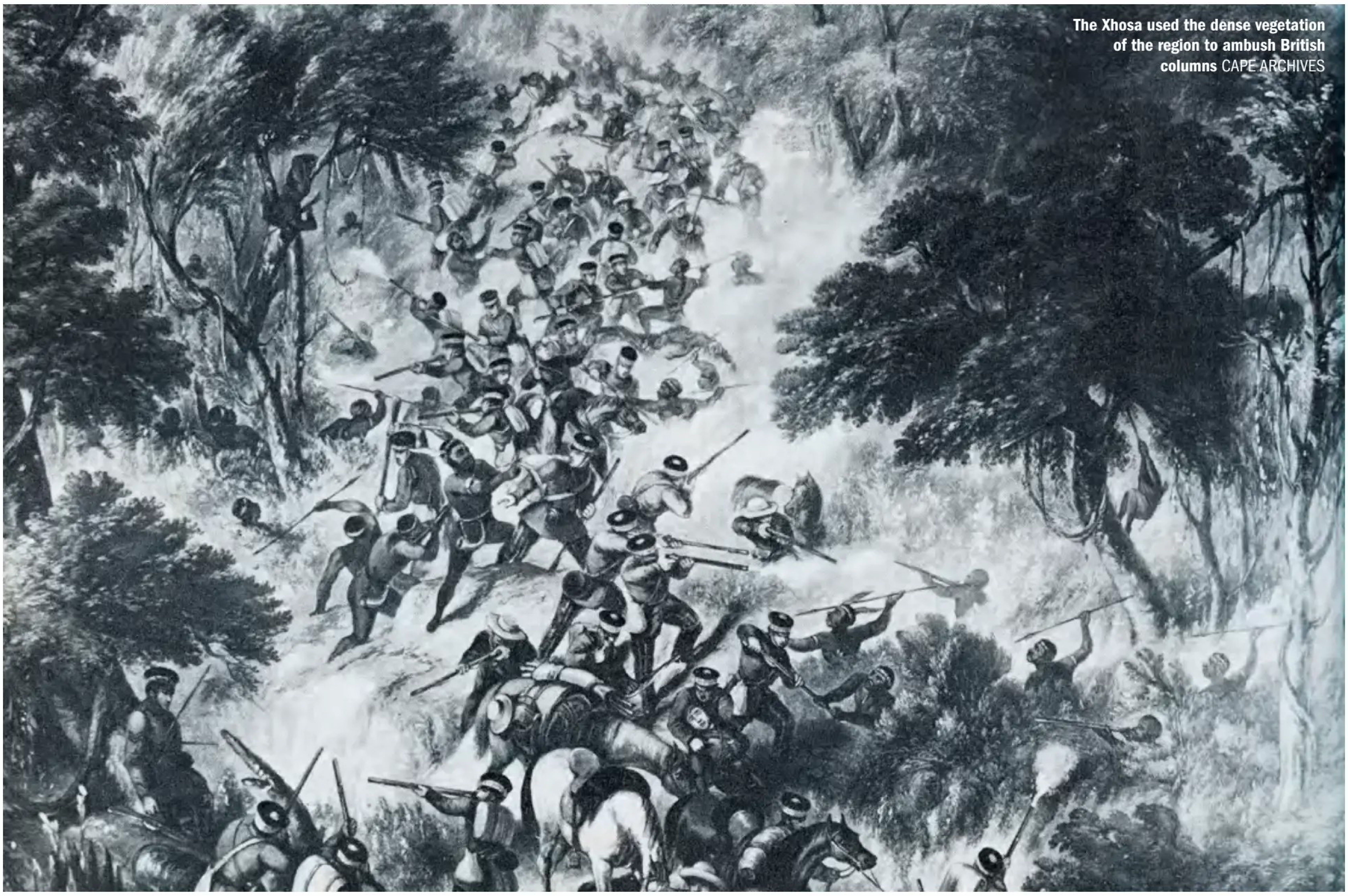
'Amathole' means calves and 'iXesi' is the Keiskamma River, the boundary between the Xhosa lands and the British colony.

The Dragoons were mounted on their heavy chargers, dressed in red tunics and blue forage caps, and the CMR on their stocky Boer ponies, dressed in green tunics and brown breeches. The foot soldiers marched in scarlet jackets with white cross belts, white trousers and cylindrical 'Albert' shako headgear. The 27th was armed with a mixture of the India Pattern 39in Third Model Brown Bess and the new Pattern 1842 percussion-cap muskets, while others, like the 91st, were fully equipped with the newer weapons. The Dragoons and the CMR carried double-barrelled carbines introduced in the 1830s.

With Sandile's "Great Place", alongside Burnshill and eight miles from Middle Drift on the road to Keiskamma Hoek as their strategic objective, on the 15th the columns united at Burnshill and formed camp. At 7am the next morning, after leaving the baggage and ammunition waggons under command of Major John Gibson of the 7th Dragoons (assisted by Captain Robert Bambrick's troop of dragoons) Somerset led 200 men of the 91st and 200 of the Kat River Burghers under Major Colin Campbell into the Amathole valley, detaching Captain Sutton with the mounted Burghers and the CMR under Major John Armstrong. Under the watchful eye of large numbers of Xhosa, the column came under heavy – but inaccurate – musket fire.

Cut and run

Burnshill camp was later attacked, but the assailants were fended off. Despite being warned by Gibson of the dangers,



The Xhosa used the dense vegetation of the region to ambush British columns CAPE ARCHIVES

Bambrick, a veteran of 31 years, led his troop in pursuit of the retiring Xhosa. He chased them into dense bush along the river, but the headstrong 47-year-old officer fell into an ambush and was shot and killed.

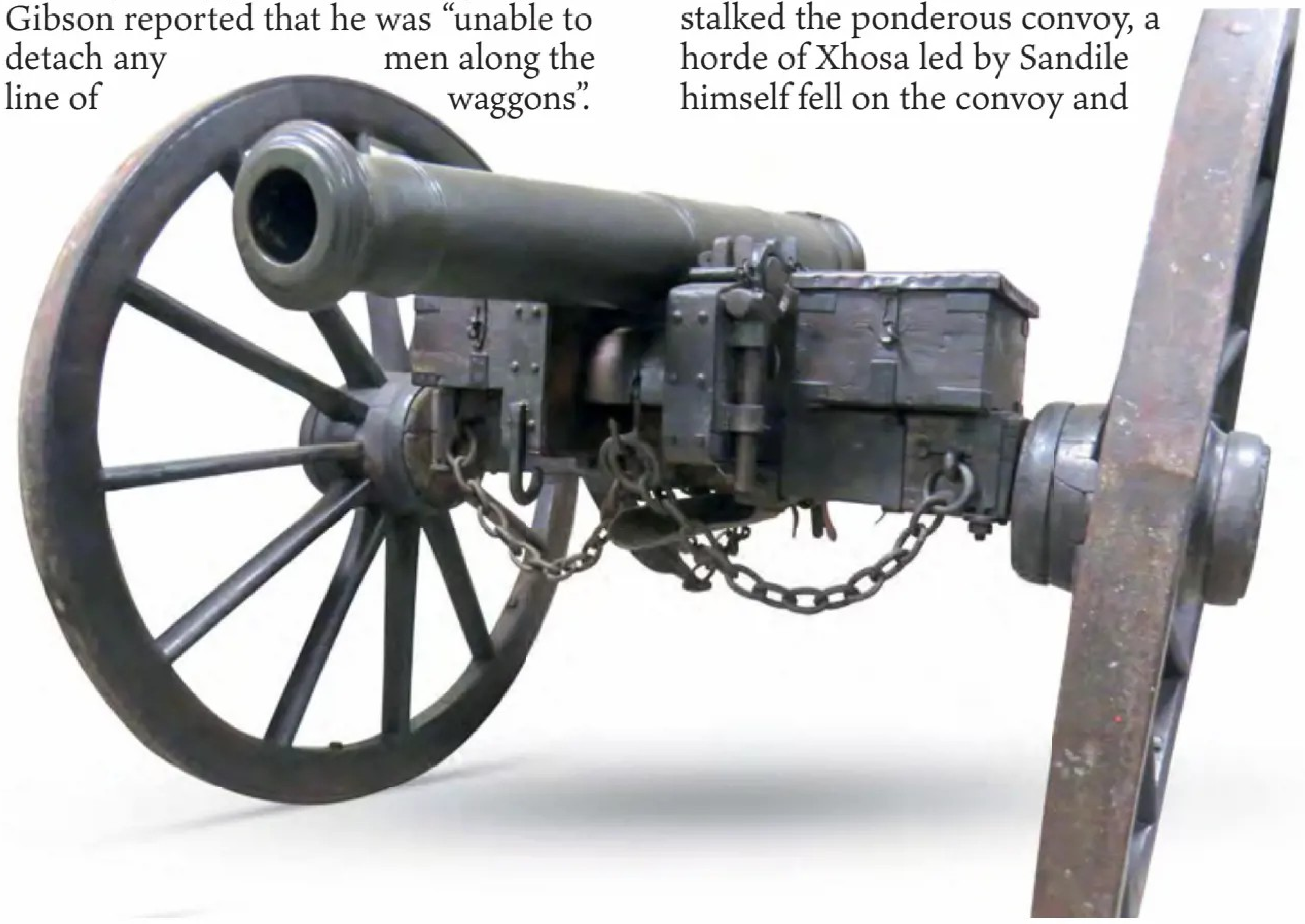
Hearing of Bambrick’s demise, Gibson set off for where the incident had occurred, taking with him a six-pounder and a company of the 91st under Captain John Rawstorne. The thicket was shelled and largely ineffective fire exchanged with the Xhosa. The 91st sustained eight casualties, four fatal. Fearing envelopment, Rawstorne withdrew to Burnshill. Some sources claim Bambrick’s remains were dismembered and his head and sword were taken by Xhosa warriors as trophies.

That night, in an increasingly tenuous situation, Gibson requested Somerset to send him “a strong reinforcement as you are aware of the immense quantity of baggage and stores I have under my charge”. In response, Gibson was ordered to strike camp and bring the baggage to Somerset. With minimal manpower at his disposal, Gibson lined up the ox-drawn waggons, while providing only scant protection along the convoy’s three-mile length. He formed an advance guard, comprising elements of the Cape Corps, a detachment of Dragoons under the command of Lieutenant Butler, one company of the 91st under Captain Wright, and a six-pounder under Lieutenant Gregory of the Royal Artillery.

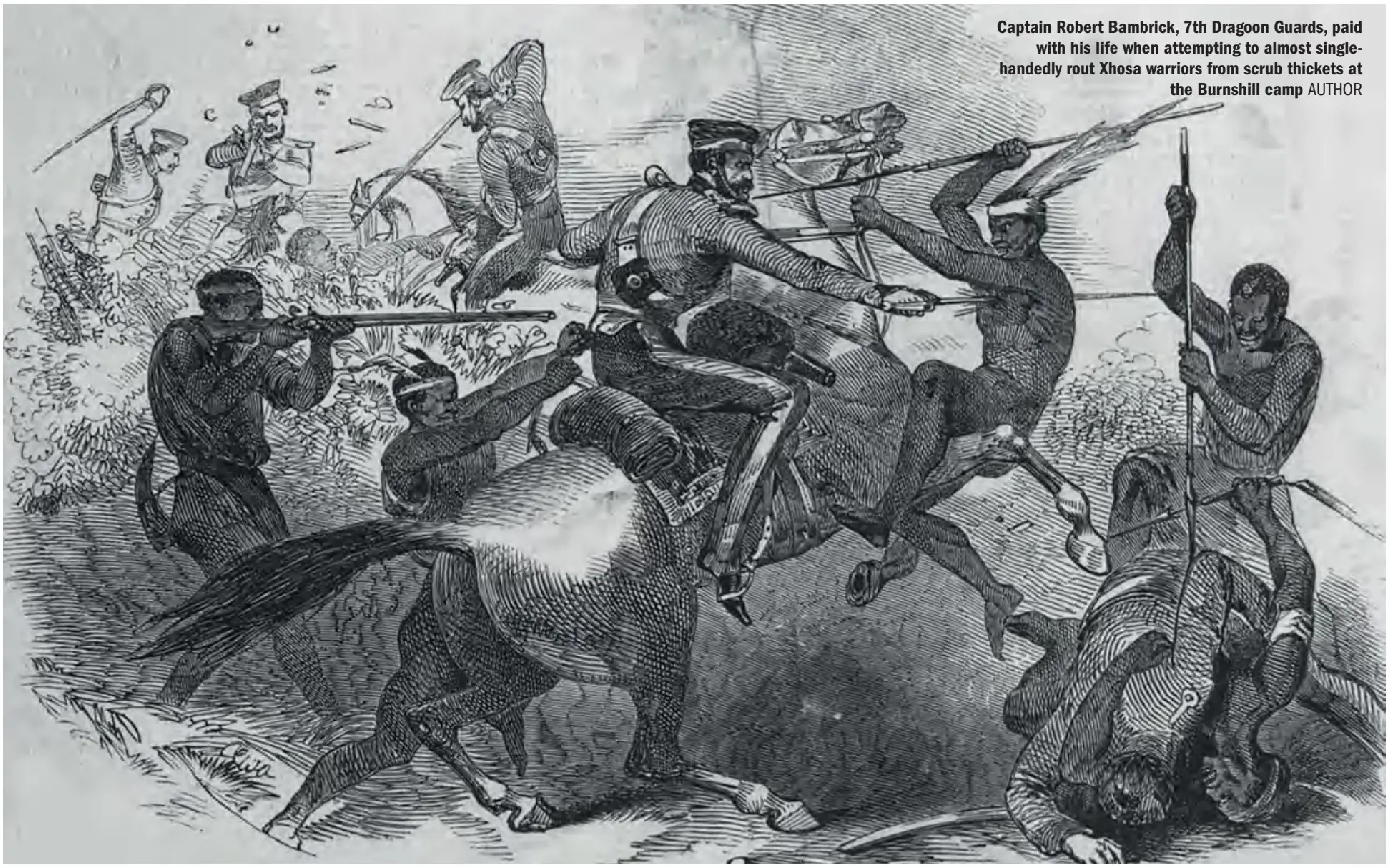
The waggons, 125 in all, were placed between the advance and rearguard. The latter comprised the remaining Dragoons, Rawstorne’s company of the 91st and one six-pounder under Lieutenant Stokes, Royal Engineers. Having positioned infantry in support of the two guns, Gibson reported that he was “unable to detach any men along the line of waggons”.

At around 10.30am on April 17, the advance guard set the convoy in motion, followed an hour later by the rearguard under Gibson. The four ammunition waggons were in front of the rearguard.

While passing through a narrow gorge, one of the central waggons bogged down. Everything behind it was brought to a standstill. Having all the while stalked the ponderous convoy, a horde of Xhosa led by Sandile himself fell on the convoy and



Despite Colonel Hare deploying a six-pounder gun at each end of the Burnshill waggon train, the terrain and length of the convoy prevented them from offering useful protection AUTHOR/ROYAL ARTILLERY MUSEUM, LARKHILL



Captain Robert Bambrick, 7th Dragoon Guards, paid with his life when attempting to almost single-handedly rout Xhosa warriors from scrub thickets at the Burnshill camp AUTHOR

cut the oxen loose – there was no one but the drivers and leaders to resist them. The Dragoons riding in the rear couldn't get near and almost 900 oxen and 61 waggons laden with stores fell into the hands of the Xhosa warriors.

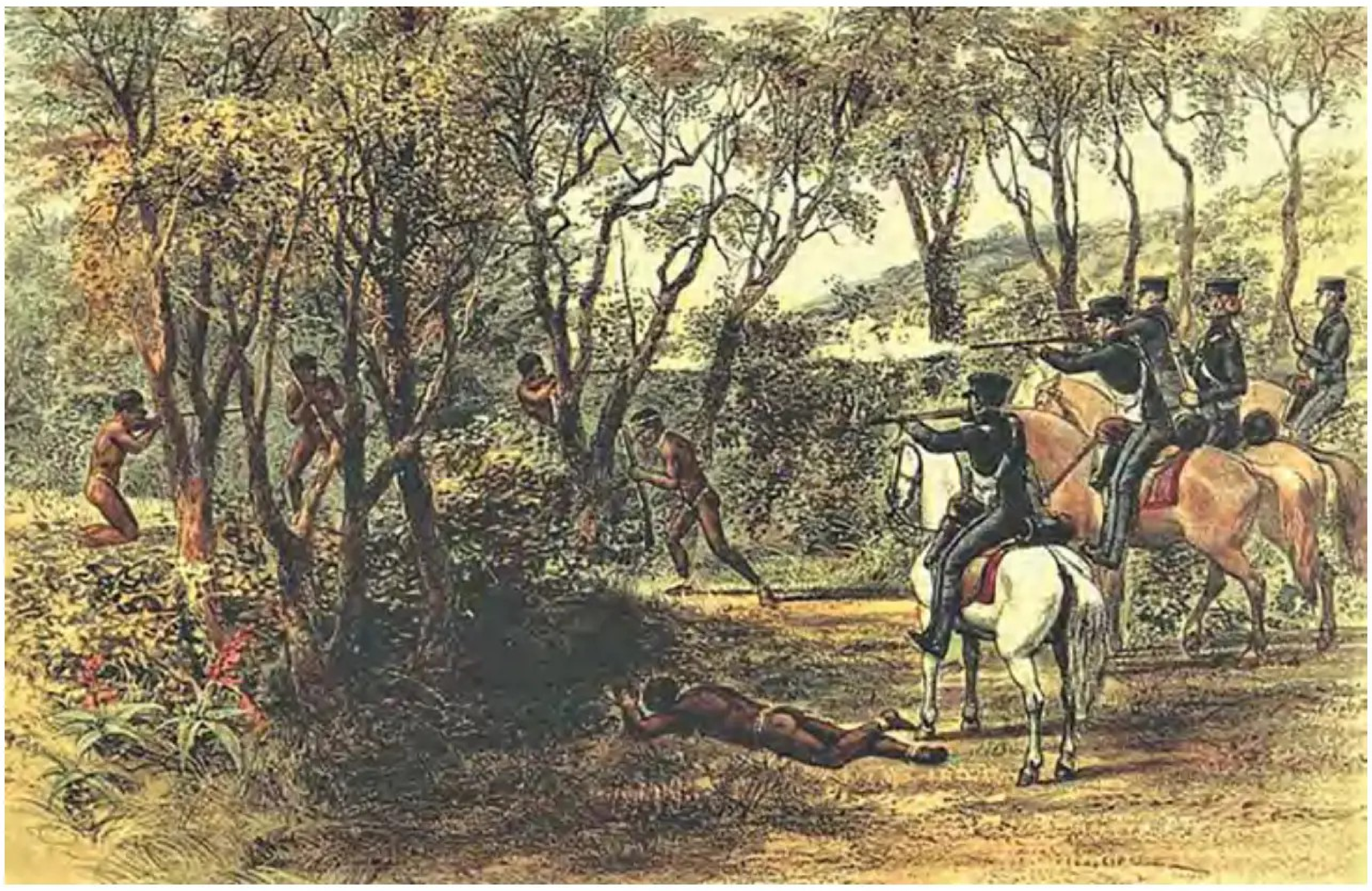
In his despatches, Gibson reported observing: "A stoppage in the line of waggons and hearing several shots proceeding from a gully by the side of the road. I shortly afterwards understood that the Xhosa, when one-half of the line had passed, made a dash upon one of them, firing at the drivers and some officers' servants that were attached to them, who were obliged to fly; that they then took out the oxen, and wheeled the waggon across the road."

Despite gallant resistance by his men and the Royal Artillery's six-pounder, Gibson decided it was "absolutely necessary, to prevent the men from being completely cut off, to return to Burnshill". Seeing that road was completely blocked, he detoured to the left and, after considerable difficulty, succeeded in getting the tail-end of the convoy back onto the line of road.

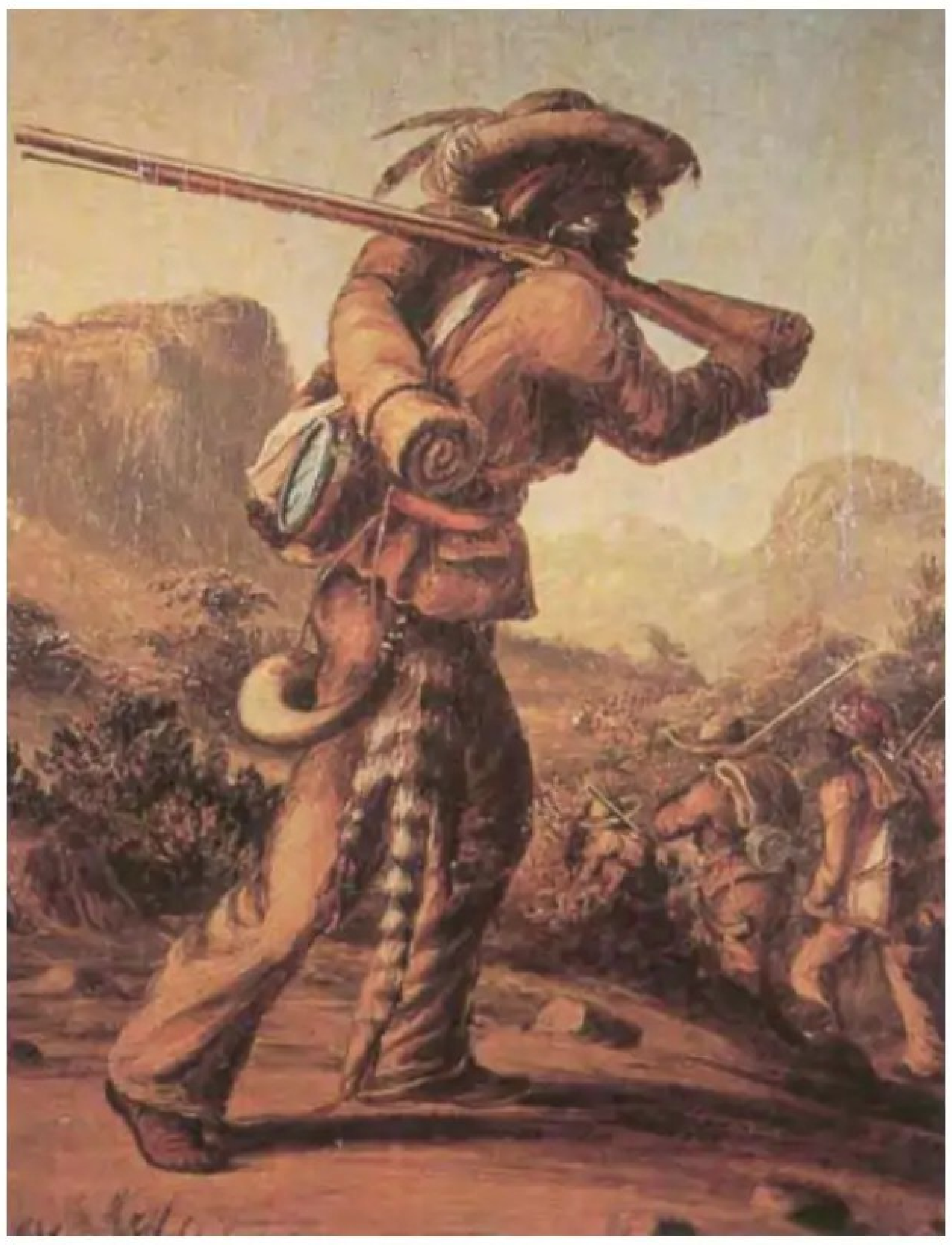
Prophetic portent

Courageous action by 250 men of Botha's Kat River detachment saved the ammunition waggons. However, Gibson found it "quite impossible to save the baggage waggons, from the [Xhosa] having driven away the oxen". About this time one of the ammunition waggons broke down, but the rounds were removed. In his accounts, Somerset reported how he had "immediately proceeded with 200 infantry under Major Campbell, the Cape Mounted Riflemen under Major Armstrong, and one gun under Lieutenant Hill, Royal Artillery, to Major Gibson's support". Arriving at the Keiskamma Drift and finding Gibson's advance guard and leading waggons already crossing the river back into the colony, Somerset secured the position with 60 men and the six-pounder gun. Then he despatched Campbell with 175 men to reinforce Gibson, who was by now back at Burnshill.

While the waggons in front of the one immobilised in the gorge reached their destination in safety, and Gibson saved the rearguard, the majority of the waggons, oxen, baggage and provisions were captured. Included in the loot was 7th Dragoon Guards regimental



With their local knowledge and experience, the Cape Mounted Riflemen were better able to track, pursue and skirmish with Xhosa warriors THOMAS LUCAS



A Fingo marksman allied to the Cape Colony forces, the Fingo/Mfengu group had previously resisted Xhosa armies CAPE ARCHIVE

silverware. In the disastrous expedition, Captain Bambrick, a young colonist named McCormick, ten men of the 91st, one Khoekhoe from the Kat River and four Cape mounties were killed. A further 14 were severely wounded.

Somerset retreated across the border, together with 1,800 captured cattle. Crazed with victory, the Xhosa followed, wreaking havoc among settler communities. Maitland proclaimed the whole colony under martial law and called out the entire burgher force. The war waged on for months.

On November 16, Sandile surrendered at Block Drift, but he was not detained and the conflict continued. Then, finally, almost a year later Sandile was forced to surrender to Lieutenant-Colonel George Buller of the Rifle Brigade, at Keiskamma Hoek, and imprisoned at Grahamstown. He was released by Governor Sir Harry Smith in December 1847 after which he continued with his struggle to regain land lost to the British. Sandile died of wounds he received after a shootout with Fingo soldiers under Major-General Frederic Thesiger on May 29, 1878.

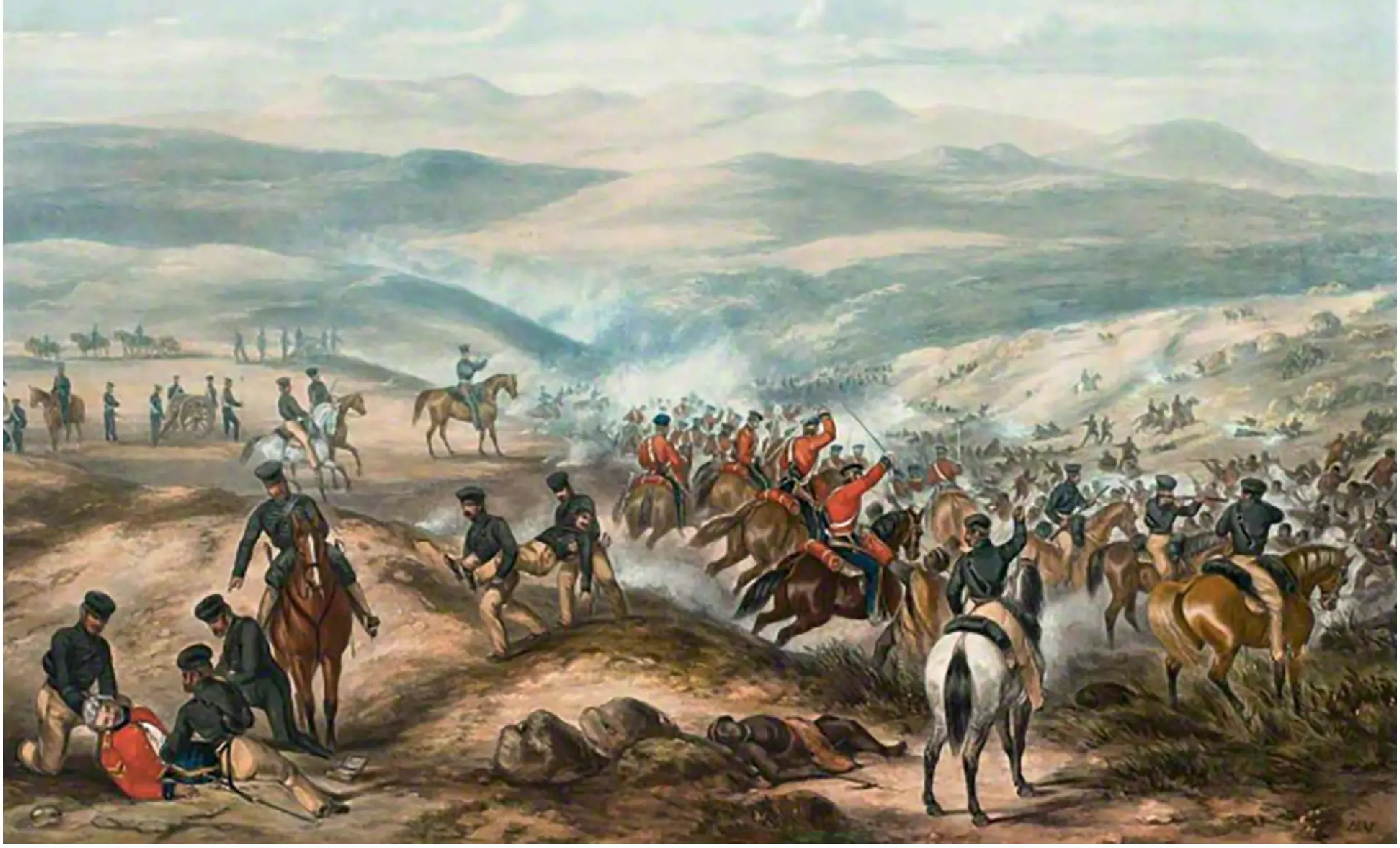
On December 23, 1847, the Seventh Frontier War ended when, at King William's Town, the Xhosa rulers were officially notified that the territory west of the Kei River had been annexed as "British Kaffraria" – but not as an extension of Cape Colony. It would be a direct-rule Crown dependency in which any white settler interest was excluded. After Sandile's death, all remaining Xhosa territory became part of the Cape Colony – but it was only with the end of the Ninth Frontier War in 1879 that Xhosa country was finally subdued.

As for Burnshill, blame for the folly of sending out the convoy with only token protection into terrain known to be swarming with Xhosa on a war footing was apportioned to both Somerset and Hare. However, Somerset was adamant that Gibson had left Burnshill an hour-and-a-half earlier than instructed, thereby not allowing Somerset's reinforcements to reach him before he set out.

Somerset restored his reputation on June 8, 1846, when he led a charge of the 7th Dragoons and the CMR against several thousand Xhosa in the open at Gwanga River. After the end of the Eighth Frontier War, Somerset, then a Major-General, left the Cape and became Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army. He died in Gibraltar in 1862. A sickly Colonel Hare retired in late 1846, and Governor Maitland assumed command of the forces. Hare died on the voyage back to England.

In 1879, the aforementioned Thesiger – Lord Chelmsford – was criticised for his decision-making and underestimation of indigenous forces during the Zulu War, which led to the infamous disaster at Isandlwana. While able to salvage his reputation later at Ulundi, he never held a field command after the conflict. BW

In the only successful 19th century Imperial cavalry charge against the Xhosa, on June 8, 1846, a troop of 7th Dragoon Guardsmen and Cape Mounted Rifles charged the Xhosa when they made the error of crossing open terrain in daylight, killing several hundred HENRY MARTENS



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183/25

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THE 'DAK': DOUGLAS'S IMMORTAL TWIN
The February 2025 edition of FlyPast features one of global aviation's most iconic types on its cover – the Douglas DC-3/C-47. Arguably the greatest aeroplane of all time, the seemingly immortal DC-3 has served in various capacities and for many nations. In our two-part feature we reflect on the type's remarkable history, profile some of its more colourful users, and look at one of its final developments, accomplished in South African hands

DE HAVILLAND
We examine four significant designs that emerged from the fabled de Havilland workshops: Comet, Mosquito, Moth and DH-4

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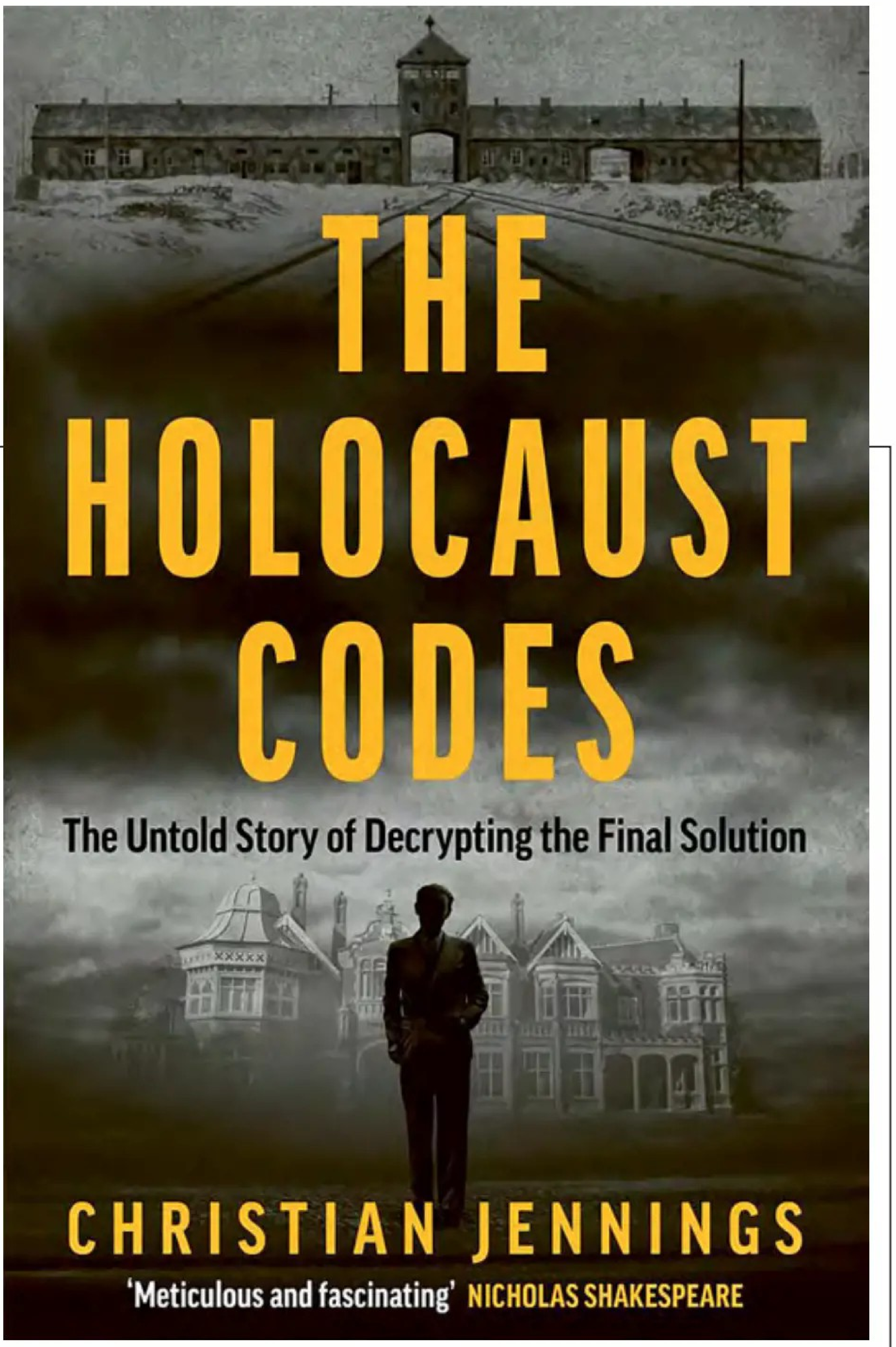
184/25

The Holocaust Codes:

The Untold Story of Decrypting the Final Solution

By Christian Jennings



In *The Holocaust* Codes, author and foreign correspondent Christian Jennings gives a thought-provoking shake-up to the general understanding of the role of Bletchley Park in World War Two. Most will be aware of the war-shortening impact of Bletchley and its sister sites during the war, and there is no doubt that you will know about the Holocaust and perhaps wondered why, no steps appeared to be taken to halt its murderous progress. This burning question is the driving force behind what is, essentially, a study of radio-decrypts from one summer in Eastern Europe, 1941.

That year, Germany's Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Centre) invaded the USSR as part of Operation Barbarossa. A codified aim of the invader was the 'Rasenkrieg' or race war against the inhabitants. Jewish people came within this remit. While communicating the progress of rounding up and killing the Jews in newly occupied Soviet territory, German messages were intercepted by British intelligence organisations. This is the central theme of *The Holocaust* Codes – but there is much more here besides that.

The story hinges on the efforts of a British cryptographer at Bletchley, Nigel de Grey, to decrypt the communication of an Austrian SS officer, Hermann Höfle, who attempted to conceal mass killings, but the primary point of judgement in this book is the examination of Army Group Centre, where the author is thorough and lucid. German police and SS elements within the Army Group, its commanders and their mission are explained alongside the links back to higher command in Germany. British understanding of what was happening was for a brief time comprehensive. Human error meant that German commanders might send lengthy and detailed reports of the horrors over the radio or through codes that had been broken. In time, German commanders were ordered to hide their crimes by only using couriers or telephones. It should be explained that the codes referred to in the title include well-known German ciphers such as Enigma, Lorenz and Domino but Jennings also delves into lesser-known ones and Abwehr/SD one-time keys. For the bulk of the book, Domino forms the key material because this code, used by the police and SS, was broken for the entirety of the war.

Even with good knowledge of the Holocaust starting to gain speed, there was little that the British could or chose to do. Without discussing the complicity of the German military in the Final Solution, Jennings describes with horror how German personnel stole from the caches of looted Jewish property at the camps. In a neat phrase, knowledge to action differential, Jennings shows that until Allied ground forces reached the camps, there really wasn't much that could be done to save those in the camps.

With judicious use of tangents, Jennings explains how naval intelligence and Luftwaffe codes fit into the codebreaking story. Furthermore, as Jennings turns focus away from the main theme and into the intelligence war as a whole (something which the author does with great skill), it is clear that British intelligence knew far less about the Holocaust than one would expect. In the superb concluding chapter, Jennings reveals that Auschwitz is not mentioned in any of the decrypted material. Domino could inform the British about the camp systems existence but not greatly. German efforts to conceal the mechanism of the Holocaust were extended to radio silence.

Likewise, Jennings makes a dramatic comparison between two conferences and their effect upon Jewish people. In June 1938 in Geneva, President Roosevelt gathered 32 nations to discuss how many Jewish refugees from Germany could be rehomed. The Dominican Republic was the only nation to agree. If each nation had accepted 17,000 refugees, then the half a million German Jews could have been saved. The second conference was the Wannsee Conference which is accepted to be the main planning meeting for the Final Solution. Jennings does well to balance moral indignation and understanding of the intricacies of intelligence war in the pages of this book. Naturally, Ultra could never be revealed to the Germans. Even if information had been forthcoming could it have been acted upon without uncovering the source?

Ultimately, *The Holocaust* Codes is much more than a study of German police codes in the Soviet Union.

Reviewed by Toby Clark

Publisher: John Blake/Bonnier Books UK
Web: bonnierbooks.co.uk
ISBN: 978-1-78946-726-0
Hardback & eBook: 346 pages

RRP: £22 (£10.99 eBook)
Illustrations: Yes
References/notes: Yes
Appendices: Yes

Double Golden Globe nominee Kerry Washington plays the commanding officer of the 6888th All images courtesy of Netflix

THE SIX *TRIPLE EIGHT*

Tyler Perry's flawed film nevertheless puts the wartime service of an overlooked battalion of African American women front and centre

Words: **Dr Sam Edwards**

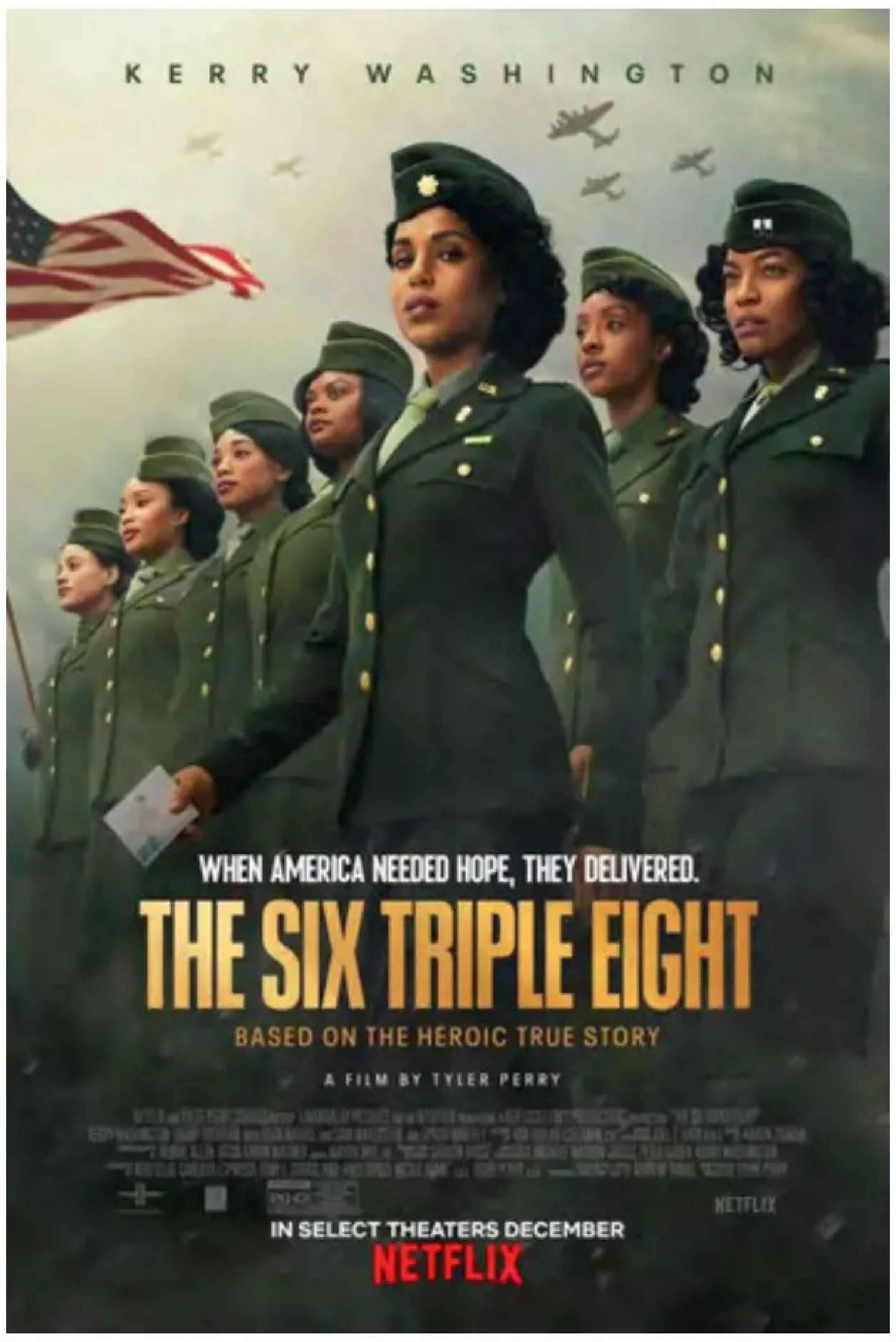
The invaluable contribution made by African Americans to the Allied victory in World War Two has very rightly drawn repeated attention. In the face of segregation and institutionalised racism, the important role played in the European air war by the Tuskegee Airmen – those in the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group of the US Army Air Forces – has been a particular focus of interest. However, in marked contrast, the specific contributions made during the war by African American servicewomen have largely received short shrift. This new Netflix production by filmmaker Tyler Perry seeks to redress the balance.

Starring Hollywood heavyweight Susan Sarandon (as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt) and with a cameo from Oprah Winfrey as African American civil rights leader Mary McLeod Bethune, Perry's film examines the recruitment, training and overseas posting of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion – the 'Six Triple Eight'. It is a worthy if flawed attempt to tell the story of an overlooked unit, one that played a crucial role in resolving what had been a persistent problem for the American military in Europe – ensuring the regular and reliable delivery of mail, something that was so important to the morale of combat troops.

The 6888th in Britain

After some scene-setting in the States, the film follows the 6888th to the European Theatre of Operations. Arriving in bomb-damaged Glasgow after a perilous crossing of the Atlantic, the women of the 6888th – with Lena Derriecott Bell King (played by Ebony Obsidian) in a leading role – quickly discover they have been set up to fail by racist senior officers. There is a veritable mountain of mail in need of sorting, a two-year backlog in fact, and they only have six months to fix it.

But, these are women to be reckoned with and what follows is a story of dogged perseverance in the face of various logistical obstacles as well as the ever-present discrimination of a racist military command.


KERRY WASHINGTON
WHEN AMERICA NEEDED HOPE, THEY DELIVERED.
THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT
BASED ON THE HEROIC TRUE STORY
A FILM BY TYLER PERRY
IN SELECT THEATERS DECEMBER
NETFLIX

Susan Sarandon features as Eleanor Roosevelt alongside Sam Waterson, who plays FDR

Of particular interest to the British viewer is the location of much of the action – Birmingham in the West Midlands. It was here that the women of the 6888th spent around three months in early 1945, some of the 130,000 African American troops posted to wartime Britain.

Billeted in King Edward School in Edgbaston, the film shows the 6888th setting about their mission with determination. Led by their commanding officer, Major Charity Adams – played by Kerry Washington – nothing will stand in their way, not even the loss of two of their number who are killed in the aftermath of an air raid by an unexploded bomb (and who are later seen buried at Brookwood American Cemetery in Surrey, originally established after World War One).

However, as the film shows, the most persistent enemy of the 6888th is not Luftwaffe aircraft, but rather their own military, with a racist general determined to undermine them at every turn. In the end though, and due to their own resilience as well as the remarkable leadership of Major Adams, the soldiers of the 6888th successfully complete their mission, in doing so earning the respect that is their due.

Service rightly acknowledged

At times, the dialogue is a little clunky, and the love story involving Lena King and Abram David (a Jewish American fighter pilot, played by Gregg Sulkin) often seems to distract rather than add. The film also misses the opportunity to explore how the 6888th were welcomed in Birmingham, where their memory is now proudly preserved; a Blue Plaque commemorating their wartime presence was unveiled at King Edward School in 2019 by the US Ambassador to Britain. Nonetheless, despite its flaws, The Six Triple Eight should be commended for putting the long-overlooked World War Two service of African American women firmly front and centre. BW

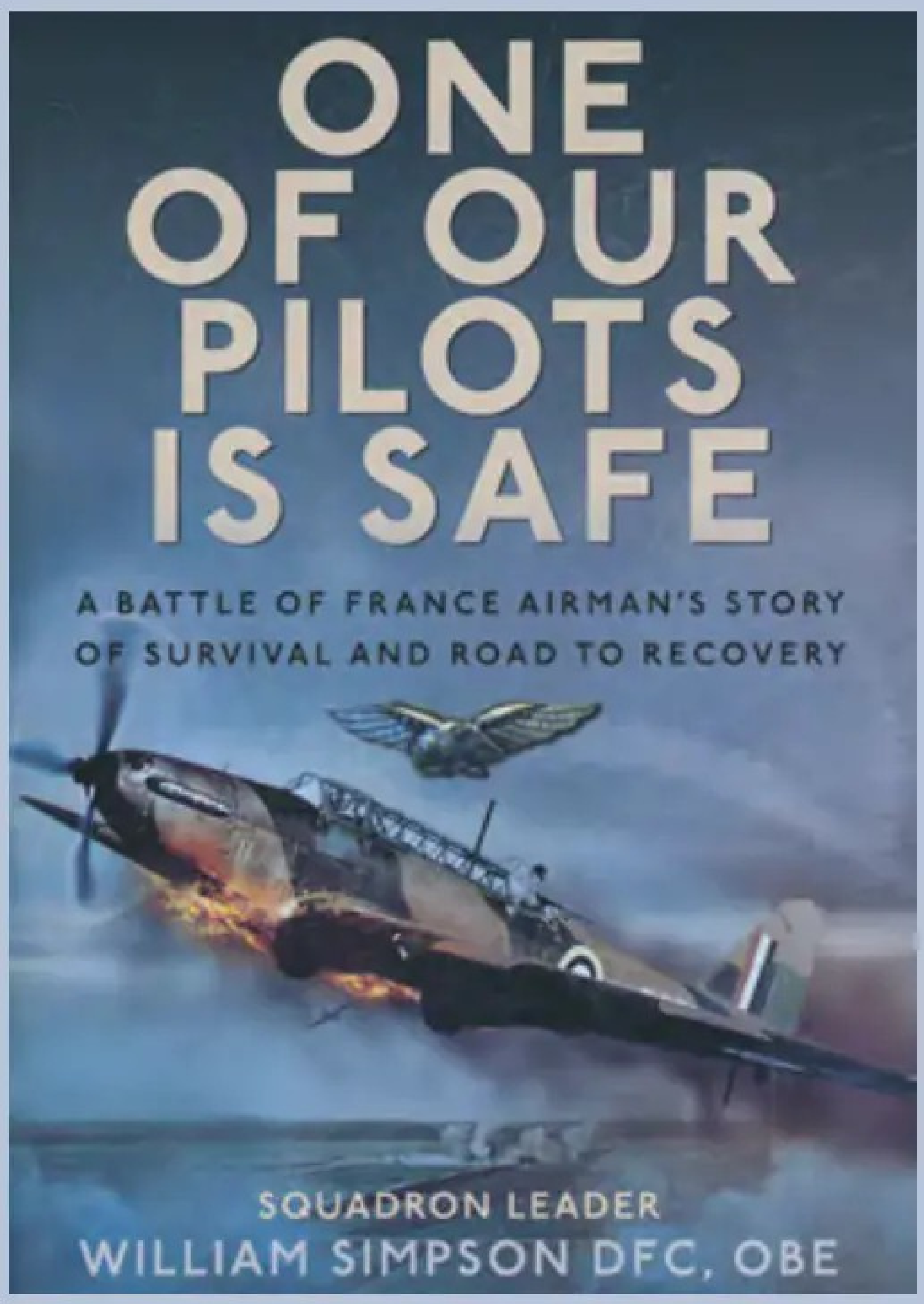
THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT

Director: Tyler Perry
Starring: Kerry Washington, Ebony Obsidian, Milauna Jackson, Susan Sarandon
Runtime: 127 minutes
Certificate: 12A
Distributor: Netflix

The film raises the profile of the Birmingham-based African American women handed a seemingly impossible job

One of our pilots is safe

A Battle of France airman's story of survival and recovery


ONE OF OUR PILOTS IS SAFE
A BATTLE OF FRANCE AIRMAN'S STORY OF SURVIVAL AND ROAD TO RECOVERY
SQUADRON LEADER
WILLIAM SIMPSON DFC, OBE

First published in 1944; this is a very welcome reprint of an astonishing story of indomitable spirit overcoming adversity. A pre-war pilot, on the outbreak of World War Two, William Simpson was serving with the Fairey Battle-equipped 12 Squadron and flew to France as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force. When the German assault against France and the Low Countries opened with unparallelled ferocity on May 10, 1940, Simpson led four Battles of 'B' Flight to attack a German column in Luxembourg. They successfully bombed in the ace of heavy enemy fire, but only one aircraft returned.

Simpson had to crash-land his aircraft, and on doing so it burst into flames. Incredibly, he was dragged clear by his gallant crew but was desperately burned. Treated for his injuries in several French hospitals, Simpson was repatriated in 1941 and came under the expert care of the remarkable New Zealand plastic surgeon Archibald McIndoe who slowly rebuilt the pilot's destroyed face and hands.

The story of this courageous member of 'The Guinea Pig Club' is movingly told with humour, humility and great humanity. An aviation classic you need to read.

Reviewed by Andrew Thomas

Author: William Simpson, OBE, DFC
Publisher: Air World/Pen & Sword (pen-and-sword.co.uk)
ISBN: 978-1-03611-558-6
Hardback & eBook: 296 pages
RRP: £25 (£14.99 eBook)

Arms for Russia

& The Naval War in the Arctic, 1941-1945

ANDREW BOYD
AUTHOR OF THE ROYAL NAVY IN EASTERN WATERS
ARMS FOR RUSSIA
& THE NAVAL WAR IN THE ARCTIC
1941–1945

Former Royal Navy submariner Andrew Boyd provides a well-researched account into one of the most interesting naval theatres of World War Two: The Arctic convoys.

Combining a rich narrative with an interrogation of primary sources, Boyd has illuminated how maintaining the hazardous convoys to the USSR was as complex as they were vital. The book's focus is twofold: highlighting the logistical issues inherent in shipping supplies through some of the most inhospitable seas, while assessing the high-stakes naval battles that punctuated the war in the Arctic. Boyd explains how the Royal Navy and its Allies fought intense, three-dimensional threats, which required 20% of the navy's fleet resources at any given time.

Well-placed to grapple with and extract the most from official documents and statistics, being a senior research fellow at the University of Buckingham, Boyd disputes the orthodox view that wartime aid to the Soviet Union was carried out more for political reasons, and did not significantly impact the USSR's war effort. Instead, he argues that Western aid sent via the convoys, at a considerable cost in lives, was a vital force multiplier that enabled Stalin to survive Nazi Germany's huge initial onslaught.

Overall, this book is a fantastic work of historical scholarship and comes highly recommended for anyone interested in naval history.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

Author: Andrew Boyd
Publisher: Seaforth Publishing/Pen & Sword
ISBN: 978-1-39903-886-7
Hardback & eBook: 576 pages
RRP: £35 (£19.99 eBook)

Sumatra 1944–45

The British Pacific Fleet's oil campaign in the Dutch East Indies

AIR CAMPAIGN
SUMATRA 1944–45
The British Pacific Fleet's oil campaign in the Dutch East Indies
ANGUS KONSTAM | ILLUSTRATED BY EDOUARD A. GROULT

Probably the most significant strategic contribution by the Royal Navy's British Pacific Fleet during World War Two was the series of attacks made by its carrier-borne aircraft against the Japanese-held oilfields in the Dutch East Indies. These raids were conducted when the fleet was on its way to Australia before further operations in the Pacific theatre.

In this well-illustrated account, featuring the work of illustrator Groult, the author examines the importance of the Sumatran oilfields to Japan's war effort and describes the capabilities of both sides. The objectives of the bombing campaign are then outlined before he describes the various British attacks and the Japanese responses in considerable detail. The narrative hangs together well thanks to the free-flowing style and is complemented with a series of maps and schematics showing various phases of the assaults.

The whole is illustrated with a selection of images showing the ships, aircraft and personnel. However, there is one minor irritation that I believe is worth sharing: the use of aircraft in European style markings. With a little more effort, more the reader could have been shown depictions of the aircraft actually involved. That aside, this account is well worth having.

Reviewed by Andrew Thomas

Author: Angus Konstam
Publisher: Osprey Publishing (ospreypublishing.com)
ISBN: 978-1-47286-241-9
Paperback & eBook: 96 pages
RRP: £16.99 (£13.59 eBook)

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089/25

HEAVY LIFT, HEAVY IMPACT

The Boeing CH-47 Chinook has served the RAF faithfully for more than 40 years. Tim Ripley tells the story of the mighty 'Wokka Wokka'

For more than 40 years, RAF Chinooks have moved British soldiers and equipment wherever needed. Flares are now an essential part of the defensive suite, and this crew tests its flare dispensers during Operation Newcombe in Mali
MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

When British soldiers need moving quickly around a battlefield, require an urgent resupply of ammunition or have to evacuate a wounded comrade, they call for a Chinook. As they hear the approaching sound of the big helicopter, they know their problems are solved, for today.

Soon after its introduction in 1962, US forces in Vietnam nicknamed the Chinook 'Big Windy', on account of the large amount of downwash it generated. To British squaddies it has always been the 'Wokka Wokka', because of the distinctive sound its twin counter-rotating rotors. Yet, whatever moniker is applied to it, nothing is quite like the Chinook. It can lift more than 10 tonnes of cargo and carry up to 55 troops thanks to its two Lycoming T55 turboshaft engines. Crucially, this powerplant, which has been constantly upgraded since the 1960s, ensures it had superb hot-high performance in the jungles of Vietnam or the mountains of Afghanistan.

The counter-rotating rotors mean that it does not need an antitorque vertical tail rotor, so all the power from the engines can be used to lift cargo or power forward flight. It also makes the Chinook very stable, enabling crews to accurately position underslung loads in delicate situations.

Designed in the late 1950s to fulfil a US Army requirement for a gas-turbine (turboshaft) powered rotorcraft to replace the Sikorsky CH-37 Mojave, test pilots of the then Boeing Vertol company lifted the YCH-1B prototype off the ground for the first time on September 21, 1961. A year later, it was redesignated the CH-47 and, in line with the US Army's policy of naming its helicopters after Native American tribes, the machine was named after the Chinook people of the US Pacific Northwest. Three years later, the first Chinooks were heading to South Vietnam with the iconic airmobile unit, the 1st Cavalry Division.

Since operated by militaries in at least 20 countries, as well as civilian operators (including, in the 1980s, British Airways), the Chinook was an immediate success. With more than 1,200 built, it is still undergoing development and continues to be procured. The RAF, which maintains probably the second-largest Chinook fleet in the world, has flown its mighty Wokka Wokka from RAF Odiham since November 1980, when the first helicopters of an initial 30 arrived at the Hampshire base.

Fifteen of the CH-47B variant had originally been ordered for the RAF to replace the Bristol Belvedere HC1 in March 1967, but by end of the year the order had been cancelled in a round of cuts. A decade later, the RAF won approval to reorder a new batch. This time they were the CH-47Cs with improved Lycoming T55-L-11E engines. The RAF dubbed them the Chinook Helicopter, Cargo Mark 1, or HC1. Over the following decades, as modifications and new variants have been ordered, the designations have changed, with the current versions being HC5s and HC6s.

Callsign *Bravo November*

In the 1970s, the world was very different. The big part of the British Army and RAF were based in West Germany to deter Soviet attack and the original justification for buying Chinooks was to carry supplies, bombs and fuel to field operating sites of the RAF

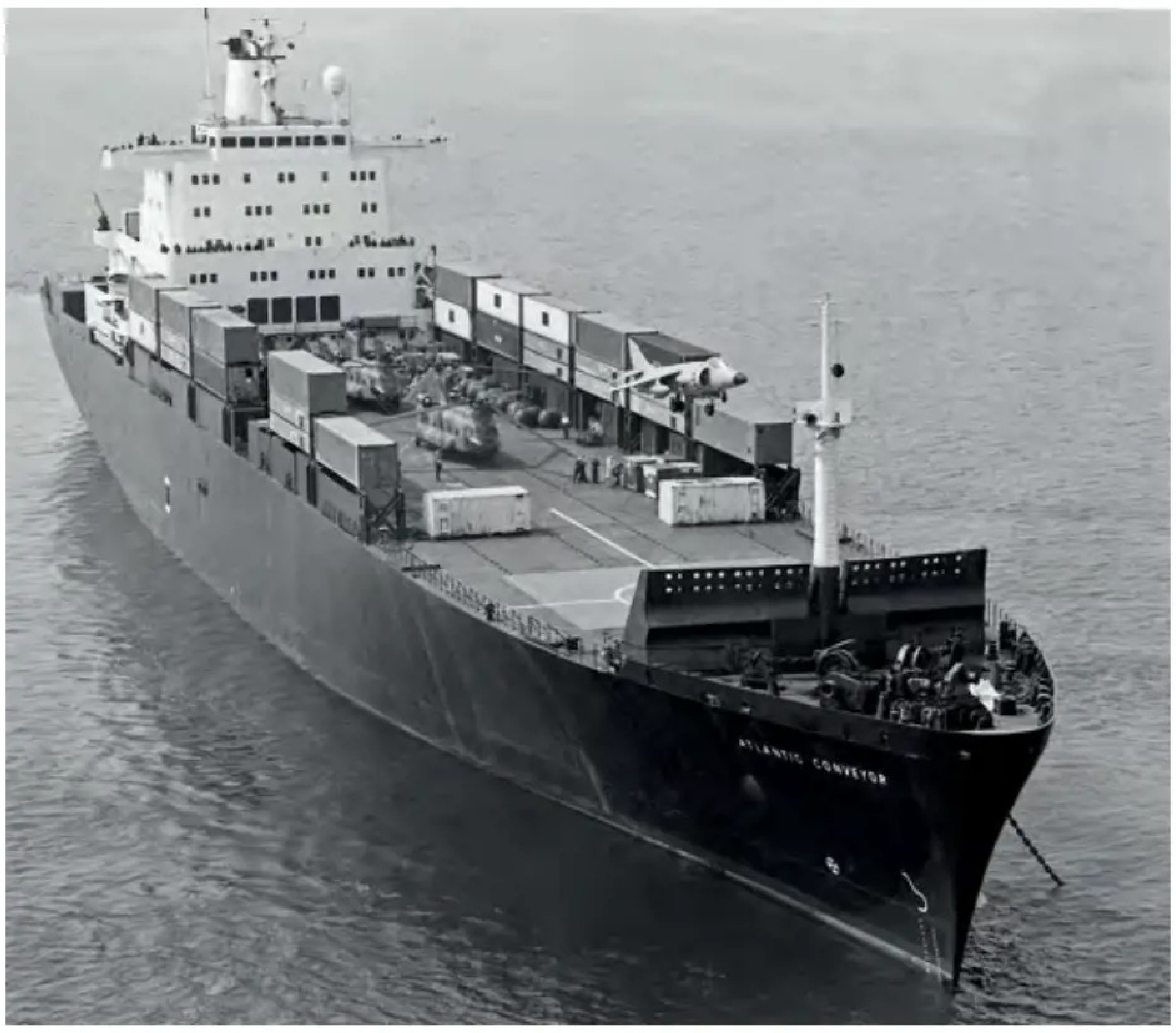
Harrier force. A secondary role was to move tactical nuclear warheads to Royal Artillery rocket batteries if the Cold War should ever escalate into a nuclear exchange. Less than 18 months after the first Chinooks arrived at Odiham, the personnel of the first operational unit, 18(B) Squadron, found itself heading to the South Atlantic to take part in a very different type of conflict.

After Argentinian troops invaded the Falklands at the beginning of April 1982, the British dispatched a task force to recapture their territory. A 10,000-strong contingent was to be landed to expel the occupying garrison. Dozens of Fleet Air Arm helicopters were dispatched to support the force as it tried to advance on Port Stanley, the island group's capital, over mountain ranges, bogs and windswept coastal inlets. It was also decided that the RAF's new Chinooks could play a vital role, particularly lifting huge pallets of 105mm shells to Royal Artillery batteries for the final battle to capture Stanley. An initial contingent of four of 18(B) Squadron's Chinooks was ferried to the South Atlantic on the requisitioned container ship SS *Atlantic Conveyor*.

From the outset, the Chinook proved invaluable. As the task force departed, 18 Squadron flew stores to ships assembling off Devonport, including delivering flying a five-tonne propeller bearing to HMS *Invincible* in the English Channel. *Invincible* had left Portsmouth the day before, therefore ducking an awkward

> ***"The original justification for buying Chinooks was to carry supplies, bombs and fuel to field operating sites of the RAF Harrier force in Germany or to move tactical nuclear warheads"***

Chinook HC1 ZA681, taken in November 1981 at Warminster, and the same helicopter upgraded to HC6A standard in 2022, before it was withdrawn from use VIA ANDREW THOMAS



The SS Atlantic Conveyor was used to ferry aircraft during the Falklands conflict, moving Chinooks, Harriers and other aircraft to the South Atlantic ROYAL NAVY

port call for repairs that would have been picked up by the world's media.

On May 25, *Atlantic Conveyor* planned to sail into San Carlos Water and offload its helicopters and supplies. However, the Argentinians launched an all-out attack on the task force, including firing two deadly AM39 Exocet anti-ship missiles at the cargo ship from a pair of Super Étendards. Twelve men were killed and the ship was consumed by fire, later sinking. While other attacks claimed more lives, strategically *Atlantic Conveyor's* loss was the worst disaster the British suffered during the conflict, dramatically influencing proceedings ashore.

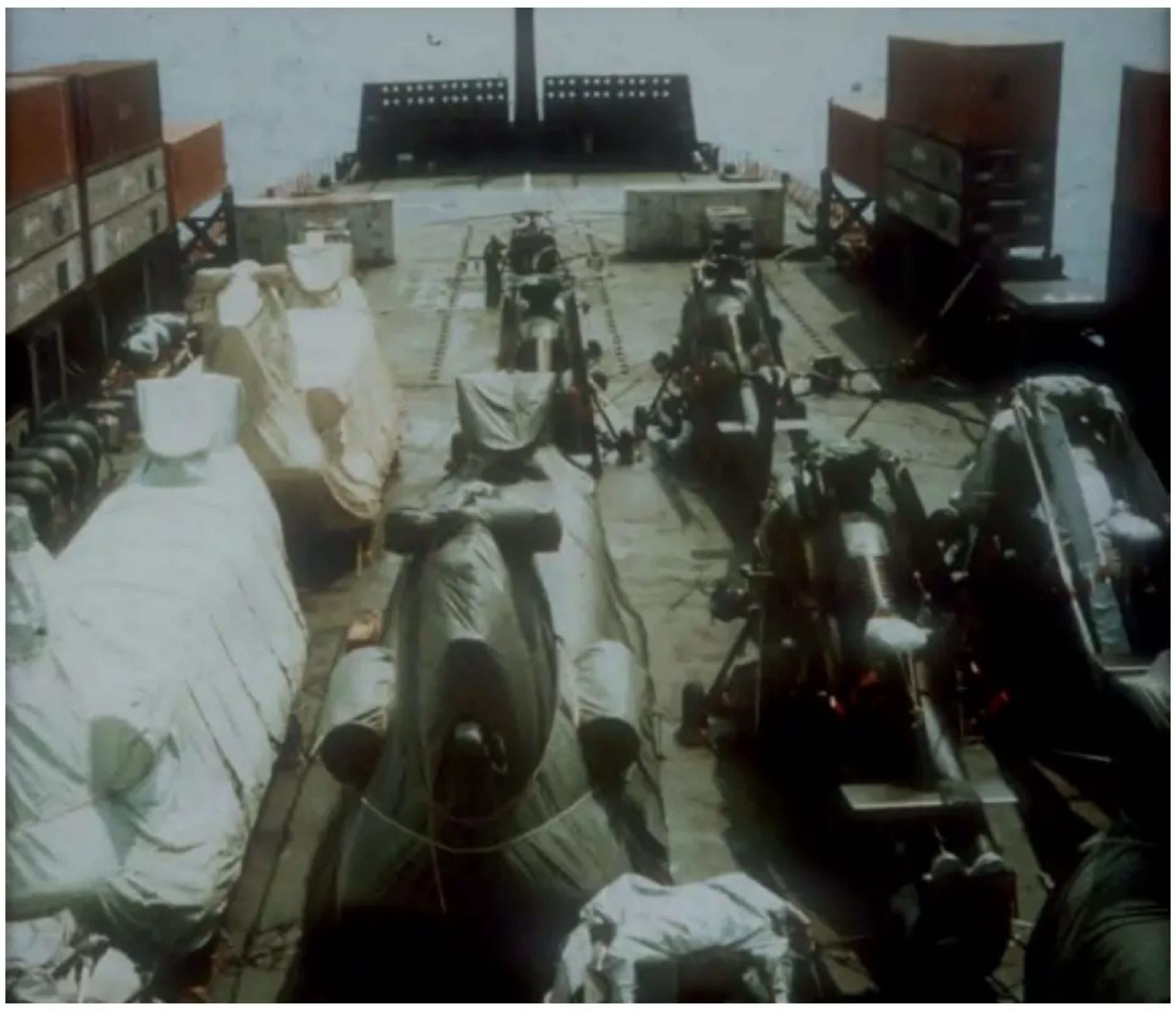
Sunk with it were nine helicopters, tonnes of munitions and fuel and, significantly, tentage and equipment such as kitchens, desalination supplies, boats, generators and a mile of steel matting for landing strips. However, the most pronounced loss was three HC1s, as the type had a capacity to lift five times the payload of the next most capable helicopter in British service, the Sea King. The troops would have to walk and go without.

Atlantic Conveyor had already flown off 14 of the Harriers it was ferrying, boosting the deployed jump-jet contingent by 70%. Additionally, by a stroke of luck, an 18(B) Squadron Chinook, *Bravo November*, was airborne at the time of the attack and made it to the aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes*. A much reduced 18(B) Squadron contingent then landed on the Falklands to operate *Bravo November*. Without tents, radios or any of the specialist equipment needed to keep a Chinook flying, the detachment had to be taken in by 845 Naval Air Squadron at a forward base at San Carlos.

Bravo November was put to use moving ammunition from the bridgehead to frontline batteries and deploying Rapier missile systems. On a sortie to fly 105mm light guns on to Mount Kent to support an SAS mission to capture the key high ground, the crew's night-vision goggles failed and they flew into a lake. Still, the Chinook managed to return to base. Its radio antenna had been ripped off, the autopilot had long failed, its IFF system was lost, there were holes in the fuselage and a cockpit door was missing. The helicopter was falling to bits and the lack of lubricants meant its engine and gearbox were in danger of failing. Nevertheless, it held together for two more vital weeks as the British massed around Stanley. During one flight, 81 paratroopers were jammed into the back – almost double the normal load – for a dash to capture Fitzroy. On its return journeys from the front, *Bravo November* brought scores of casualties to the improvised field hospital at Ajax Bay. By the time the Argentinians surrendered, the machine had notched up 109 hours, carrying 1,500 troops, 95 casualties, 550 POWs and 550 tonnes of cargo.

Bravo November's main pilot, Squadron Leader Dick Langworthy, received the DFC for his efforts. Another Chinook, ZA707, also served with distinction. Landing at Ascension Island, it replenished the vessels of the task force and moved vital equipment, flying more than 100 hours and, in one day, transporting 350 tonnes of stores to waiting ships.

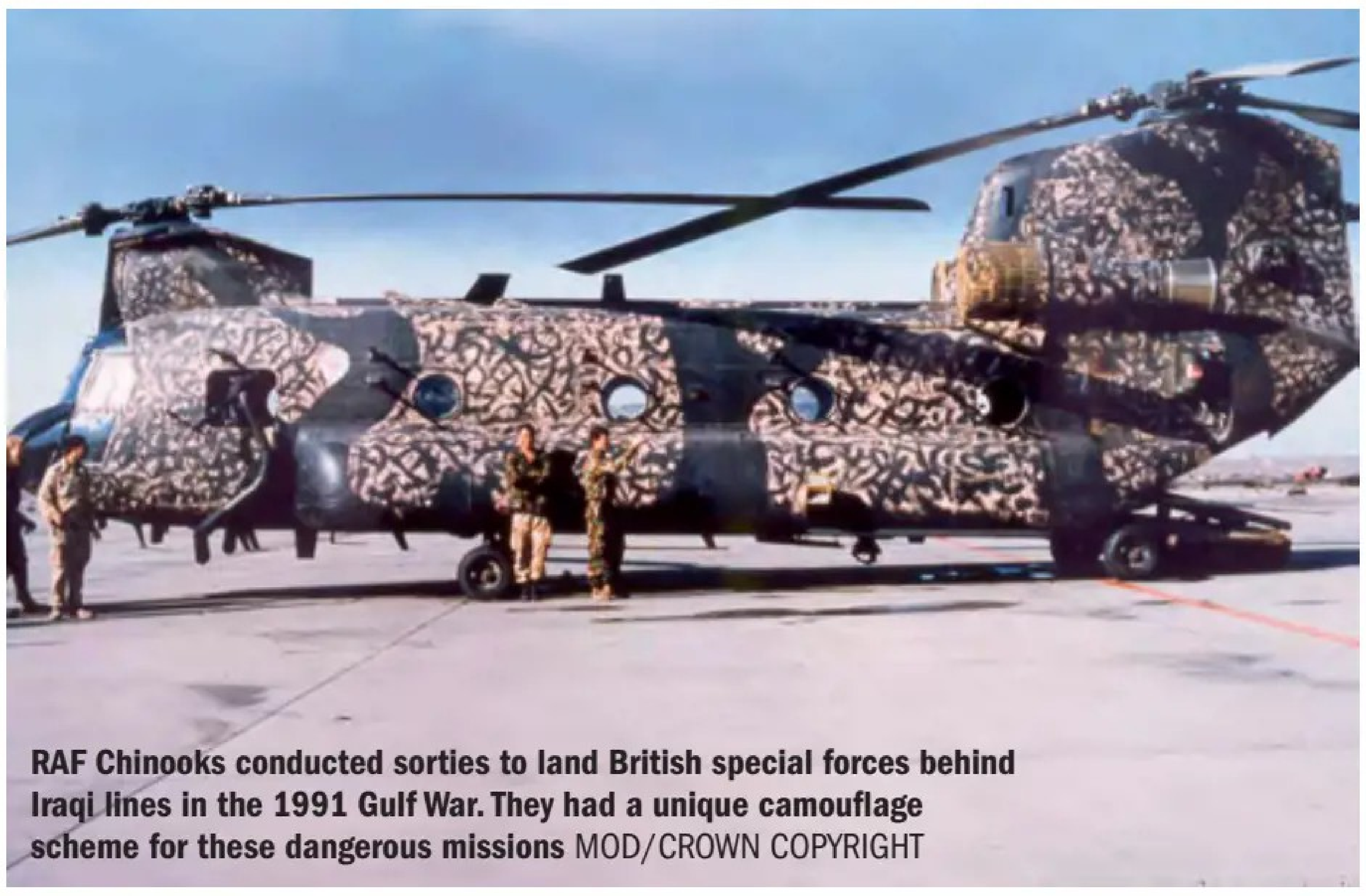
> ***"Bravo November was falling to bits and the lack of lubricants meant its engine and gearbox were in danger of failing. Nevertheless, it held together for two more vital weeks"***



Callsign *Bravo November* sailed to the Falklands inside a waterproof cocoon on the deck of *Atlantic Conveyor* ANDY LAWLESS

TOWNSEND THORESEN

After the surrender of Port Stanley in June 1982, Argentinian POWs were pressed to work loading cargo onto *Bravo November* ANDY LAWLESS



RAF Chinooks conducted sorties to land British special forces behind Iraqi lines in the 1991 Gulf War. They had a unique camouflage scheme for these dangerous missions MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

In 1995, RAF Chinooks were sent to Bosnia to support NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) in separating warring factions and bring the conflict to an end NATO

Global role

The Chinook's Falklands exploits became the stuff of legend, but, importantly, everyone now knew what a Chinook could do. For 40 years, they took part in every overseas operation involving Britain and, closer to home, were used extensively on security tasks in Northern Ireland or disaster relief missions around the country.

In September 1982, 7 Squadron re-formed at Odiham to also operate Chinooks. The Chinooks of the RAF Support Helicopter Force (SHF) saw their role expand dramatically. During the 1980s, the British Army of the Rhine formed an airmobile brigade to act as a fast-moving anti-tank reserve force. It relied on Chinooks to ferry detachments equipped with MILAN wire-guided anti-tank missiles to set up blocking positions in the path of Soviet tank columns.

In 1990, after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, Chinook crews headed to the Middle East for a very different type of war. When Scud missiles started raining down on Israel, putting the anti-Saddam coalition under threat, Britain decided to send SAS patrols into western Iraq to hunt for the missile launchers. Chinooks from 7 Squadron's Special Forces Flight flew low at night over the desert to deliver SAS teams to their target areas. One of these, Bravo Two Zero, was famously lost in action, with all but one of its members being killed or captured. The remainder of the SHF was dispatched to eastern Saudi Arabia and played a vital role moving supplies and personnel of 1 (British) Armoured Division to its start line ahead of the big assault on Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

In 1995, the Chinooks were called to serve with the UN peacekeepers and NATO troops in Bosnia. They remained on duty in the Balkans for another four years, which culminated with them flying British paratroopers to seize control of the vital Kacanik Gorge in June 1999 and open the route into war-torn Kosovo.

In 2000, during Operation Palliser in Sierra Leone, Chinook HC2s supported the British effort, with at least four 7 Squadron machines deployed alongside 1 Para in Freetown. Departing Odiham with just six hours' notice, two aircraft flew direct from the base to Freetown – the longest flight in the history of the Chinook – a 3,000-mile, three-day journey with one HC2 clocking up an extra 500 miles by being recalled from an exercise in Scotland. Others flew in from the Balkans. The rotorcraft were primarily used for evacuations and troop movements, working with British and Indian troops, but also inserted paratroopers and provided them fire support during Operation Barras.

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001 attacks, Britain joined the US-led campaign to hunt the perpetrators in the mountains of Afghanistan. For nearly 15 years, RAF Chinooks would be almost continuously deployed, helping British troops fight Taliban insurgents and Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terror organisation. The Chinook's power and endurance made it ideal for flying troops into Afghanistan's mountains during its hot summer months.

The first phase of the RAF Chinook deployment in Afghanistan took place over winter 2001/2002 and saw them moving special forces teams seeking out Al Qaeda fugitives. Between April and June 2002, a large force of Chinooks from 27 Squadron were assigned to fly Royal Marines into the mountains along the Pakistan border to search for suspected hideouts.

Between 2003 and 2005, Chinooks also played an important role in the invasion of Iraq. *Bravo November* was still in service and had the distinction of landing the first British troops on the Al Faw Peninsula on the first day of the allied invasion.

British paratroopers prepare to embark on an RAF Chinook at Kacanik during the Kosovo insertion operation in 1999 KEVIN CAPON/CROWN COPYRIGHT

Flying hospitals

In spring 2006, RAF Chinooks deployed to Helmand province in Afghanistan as part of an expanded NATO mission. British paratroopers of 16 Air Assault Brigade soon came under furious attack by Taliban insurgents and found themselves besieged in several small outposts, known as 'platoon houses.' During summer 2006, day after day, the Chinook crews flew daring sorties to deliver supplies to and pick up wounded from the besieged compounds.

This set the scene for the next eight years of operations in Helmand, with Chinooks providing a lifeline for British troops. A Chinook was kept on 24/7 alert at Camp Bastion, with a medical emergency response team (MERT) ready to recover wounded soldiers across Helmand. MERT personnel were all highly trained paramedics, who could keep casualties alive for vital minutes as they were flown from the battlefield to Bastion's hospital. The helicopters repeatedly came under fire; one was shot down by an RPG in 2009 and another was lost in a heavy landing as it avoided enemy fire.

During its 45 years of service, the RAF has progressively upgraded and modernised its Chinooks. The first major upgrade was launched in the 1990s to bring them up to a similar configuration as the US Army's D models. The major element of this was installations of a fully digital flight control system (known as FADEC) and other improved avionics. This process was far from smooth and FADEC was accused of contributing to the infamous Mull of Kintyre crash in June 1994, which resulted in the deaths of 29 people. An attempt to introduce eight HC3s with advanced equipment for special operations in the late 1990s was also dogged by technical issues and the helicopters were held in storage for years until being made combat-ready in 2009.

At the height of the Afghan war, a major upgrade was launched to fit the entire fleet with digital cockpits and other avionic upgrades under Project Julius. This ran from 2009 to 2015 and once the fleet-wide upgrades were completed the refitted helicopters were all redesignated as either HC5s or HC6s, confusingly.

The RAF Chinook fleet has been extensively overhauled at regular intervals at the Fleetland maintenance depot in Hampshire, but the helicopters delivered in the early 1980s are starting to show their age. In April 2022, the Chinook fleet was at its peak, with 60 helicopters on the ramp at Odiham or RAF Benson. It is becoming increasingly expensive to keep them flying, so a project to withdraw them from service and replace them with newer machines was begun. The oldest were retired and some recycled to harvest spare parts. A few, including the iconic *Bravo November,* were sent to museums.

One or more long-range fuel tanks can be installed inside the Chinook's cavernous compartment to improve its range. However, the RAF seeks to increase operating range without compromising carry capacity, so an order for 14 H-47ER (extended range) variants was confirmed in March 2024. A UK designation for these helicopters is yet to be announced. The ordering of new helicopters enabled a major programme of retirements to be launched in November 2024, to withdraw 14 older airframes over the next three years, ahead of the H-47ERs arriving. Once complete, it is envisaged 51 Chinooks will remain in RAF service. As of January 2025, 59 are in use.

Chinook forever?

It has been almost 45 years since the delivery of the first Chinook to Odiham. Since then, the 'Wokka Wokka', has been on duty in almost every theatre where British forces have deployed. More recently, the RAF have sent it to support UN peacekeepers in Mali, on anti-terrorist duty in Iraq

Operation Jacana in 2002 would not have been possible without RAF Chinook HC2s flying Royal Marine Commandos onto the high mountain ranges of eastern Afghanistan MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

An RAF Chinook ramp gunner scans for threats during a mission along the Pakistani border as part of Operation Jacana in 2002 MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

To avoid an expected sandstorm, RAF Chinooks moved ashore from HMS *Ark Royal* in the days before the Al Faw assault in March 2003 AUTHOR

Royal Marines boarding a Chinook in Helmand province in October 2006, just as Britain's war in Afghanistan was escalating MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

> *"Questions have been raised about the vulnerabilities of the Chinook against a peer adversary, despite its reputation as one of the fastest military helicopters"*

and Syria, and helping NATO protect Estonia.

However, questions have been raised about the vulnerabilities and capabilities of the Chinook against a peer adversary, despite its reputation as one of the fastest military helicopters in service. Its extraordinary capability to carry large loads is becoming less useful as ground systems incorporating greater protection and new technologies have become increasingly heavier.

Nevertheless, in 2017, the Ministry of Defence confirmed it would retain the Chinook for decades to come, stating that it intended to "sustain this core capability into the 2040s." By that point, an alternative helicopter or tiltrotor might be available. In the meantime, new-build Chinooks have generally replaced older examples, so it is possible a re-engined or enlarged model, perhaps with some unmanned function, will be introduced.

Whatever the outcome, it will be a long time coming. In October 2024, aviation journalist Thomas Newdick wrote that the US Army had only just begun to consider the Chinook's successor and that a new batch of upgrades might still extend its service life.

Remote army forward operating bases in Afghan villages relied on RAF Chinooks for daily resupply flights to keep them fighting MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

CHINOOK HC1 VS CONTEMPORARY TANDEM-ROTOR HELICOPTERS

	CHINOOK HC1	BELVEDERE HC1	H-21 SHAWNEE	CH-47C CHINOOK	CH-46 SEA KNIGHT	YAK-24 HORSE
In service:	1980-93 (HC1 only)	1961-69	1952-67	1967-90s	1962-2015	1955-60s**
Country:	United States/Britain	Britain	United States	United States	United States	Soviet Union
Manufacturer:	Boeing Vertol	Bristol	Piasecki	Boeing Vertol	Boeing Vertol	Yakovlev
Length:	51ft 10in (15.8m)	54ft 4in (16.5m)	52ft 6in (16m)	51ft 10in	44ft 10in (13.7m)	73ft 6in (22.4m)
Height:	18ft 7in (5.75m)	17ft (5.18m)	15ft 9in (4.8m)	18ft 11in (5.77m)	16ft 9in (5.1m)	21ft 4in (6.5m)
Powerplant:	2 x Lycoming T55-L-11C turboshafts (5,700shp)	2 × Napier Gazelle 100 turboshafts (2,930shp)	1 × Wright R-1820-103 Cyclone 9-cyl radials (1,425hp)	2 x Lycoming T55-L-11C or T55-L-7C turboshafts (5,700shp)	2 × General Electric T58-GE-16 turboshafts (2,740shp)	2 × Shvetsov ASh-82V 14-cyl radials (3,600hp)
Max speed/range:	196mph (315kph)/430mi (700km)	138mph (220kph)/460mi (740km)	127mph (204kph)/265mi (426km)	196mph/515mi (830km)	166mph (267kpm)/630mi (1,020km)	109mph (175kph)/240mi (380km)
Crew:	3-4	3	3 -5	3-4	5	3
Capacity:	50 passengers or up to 11,000lb (4,990kg)	19 passengers or up to 6,000lb (2,700kg)	20 passengers or up to 5,000lb (2,268kg)	55 passengers or up to 20,000lb (9,100kg)	24 passengers or up to 7,000lb (3,200kg)	19 passengers or up to 4,400lb (2,000kg)
Armament:	Two or three 7.62mm GMPGs	None	One or two 12.7mm M2s or 7.62mm M60s	Up to three 12.7mm M2s or 7.62mm M60/ M240Bs/M134 Miniguns	Two 12.7 mm) GAU-15/ As and one 7.62mm M240D	None
No. built:	38 (HC1 only)	26	550	530 (CH-47C only)	524	100 (approx.)

NOTES: *Maximum capacity had doubled by the time the HC6 entered service. **Estimated, detail on the Yak-24 is sparse but it is known it was plagued with technical problems and replaced by the Mil Mi-6.

RAF CHINOOK VARIANTS

HC1	Original purchase, 38 delivered by 1986 in two batches, 30 with Lycoming T55-L-11E engines, eight with Lycoming T55-L-712s
HC2	Upgraded version similar to the US CH-47D, including FADEC. Introduced from 1993. Two batches of aircraft were added, the first three in 1995 and then six HC2A from 1995
HC3	British variant of the MH-47E ordered in 1995 for the special forces role with extended range fuel tanks. Eight ordered and delivered by 2001. Not certified as fit for service until 2009
HC4	Upgrade of 38 Chinook HC2/2As under Project Julius to fit digital cockpit
HC5	Eight upgraded Chinook HC3s under Project Julius to fit digital cockpit
HC6	Fourteen CH-47F-derived Chinooks ordered in 2009. Last aircraft delivered in December 2015
HC6A	Upgrade of the HC4s, with the replacement of the analogue flight control systems with the Boeing Digital Automatic Flight Control System (DAFCS)
H-47ER	14 ordered in March 2024 for the special forces role

Medical emergency response teams in Chinook HC2s saved hundreds of lives on their missions from Camp Bastion during the Afghan war MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

French armed forces do not have their own heavy-lift helicopters, so asked the RAF to help them in their Mali campaign by deploying Chinooks between 2018 and 2022 MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

In Britain, the decision to buy more Chinooks will keep the RAF's fleet in service well into the second half of the century, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this iconic type might reach its centenary.

RAF crews have grown to love the Chinook. Its reliability and robustness mean it is a dream to fly, and they say it rarely lets them down. For generations of British soldiers and Royal Marines, the Chinook has been their saviour. Ever since *Bravo November* played a lead role in the Falklands in 1982, there have been a string of stories of Chinooks saving the day. The MERTs in Afghanistan and Iraq literally saved hundreds of lives, delivering wounded ISAF soldiers and Afghan personnel and civilians from the battlefield to field hospitals. Despite its long and distinguished service, it is a safe bet to say that the final chapter of the RAF Chinook story has yet to be written. BW

The French forward operating base at Goa was the home of 1310 Flight between 2018 to 2022 and was sustained by rotating detachments of 18(B) and 27 Squadron Chinooks MOD/CROWN COPYRIGHT

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Enemy resistance was fanatical at times, but the end was coming into focus.

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BLITZ SPIRIT

Whether driven by fear or defiance, national teamwork and bonhomie have been hailed as contributing much to the outcome of World War Two. But was this gung-ho attitude political propaganda... an urban myth... or truly valuable?

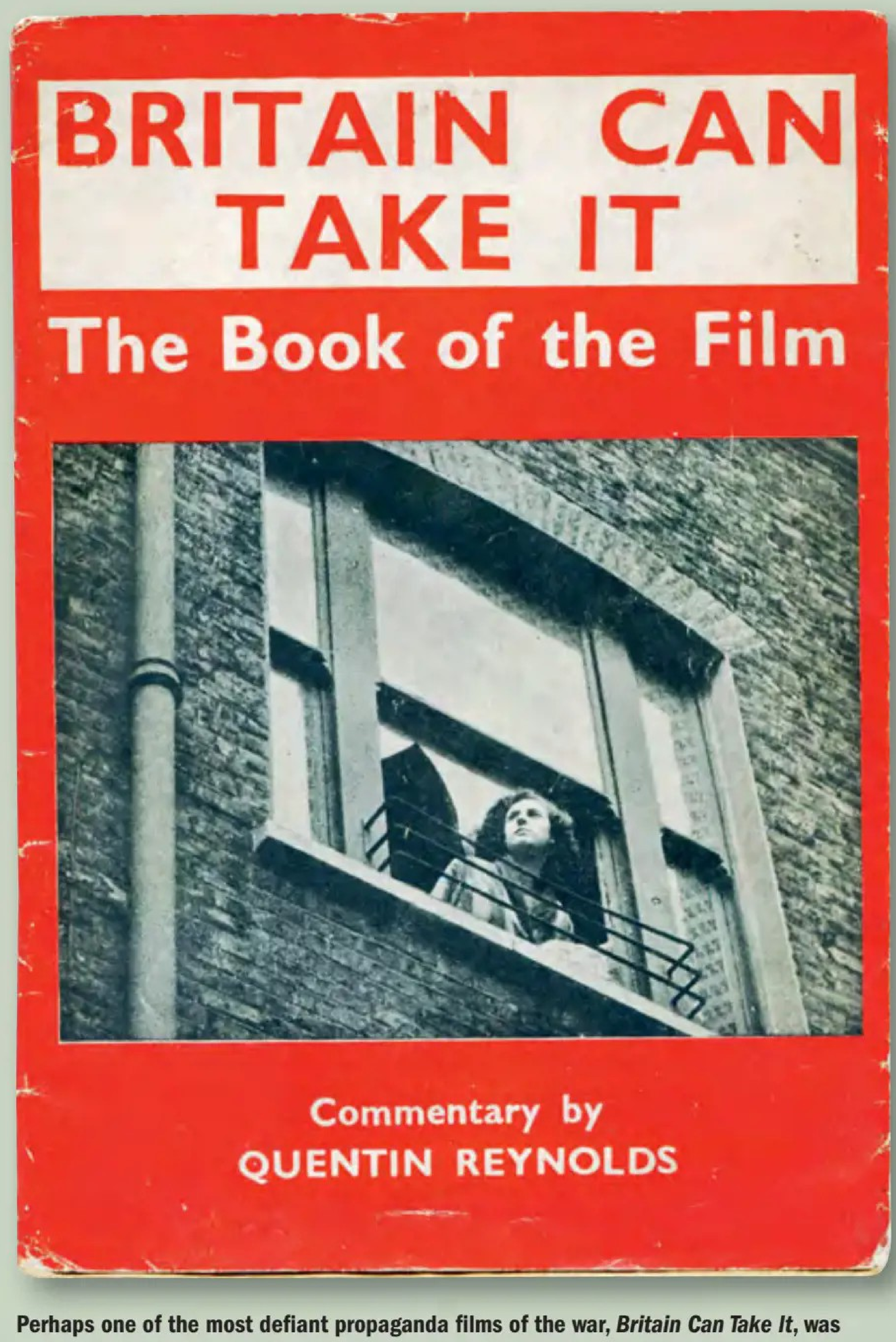
By Austin J Ruddy

You cannot see it, taste it or smell it, but 'Blitz Spirit' has been touted as a World War Two winner and vital to the maintenance of British morale on the Home Front. This psychological defiance was a key weapon in the nation's defence. Eighty years on, it is still talked of and invoked at times of national challenge, whether during pandemic, flood or other incidents. But what actually is Blitz Spirit – did it even really exist and if so, can it play a part in modern society?

Readers will invariably have heard of Blitz Spirit (or 'Wartime Spirit') and have their own ideas as to its definition, but as historian Professor Richard Overy states, "what the term means has never been accurately defined, then or now". As a general summary, most of us envision a mixture of stoicism, altruism and defiance, perhaps with a large portion of patriotism, probably tempered by one's own political beliefs.

Whatever the true definition, if there is one, we know a little of how Blitz Spirit came about and its significance. Before the war, in 1938, a committee of psychiatrists predicted air raids would lead to three times as many mental as physical casualties, resulting in three to four million psychiatric patients. Such statistics were largely driven by the fear of the unknown. The devastation of towns such as Guernica during the Spanish Civil War proved the potency of the Luftwaffe's might. Britain's focus on ARP preparations, while attempting to protect the nation, only ratcheted up this concern. Future prime minister Harold Macmillan later recalled that many "thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear war today".

But, unlike the pre-war forecasts of the sky going black with bombers and whole cities levelled, when the Blitz started, the Luftwaffe proved not as capable as feared and their attacks proved survivable for the vast majority of urban citizens. It's worth noting that the Luftwaffe had launched the area bombing of British cities to crush the spirit of their inhabitants, but mental hospitals that had prepared for an influx of psychiatric casualties received fewer admissions in 1940 than they had done in 1939. Although great damage was done and tens of thousands died, the cities carried on, as did war production. In the words of the now-infamous poster, most people really did "Keep Calm and Carry On".



Perhaps one of the most defiant propaganda films of the war, *Britain Can Take It*, was made not by a Briton, but leading American journalist Quentin Reynolds, who really captured the Blitz Spirit of bombed Londoners. His words and stills from the film were published as a book the following year (John Murray Ltd, 1941). Uncommon, £20

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF AUSTIN J RUDDY UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

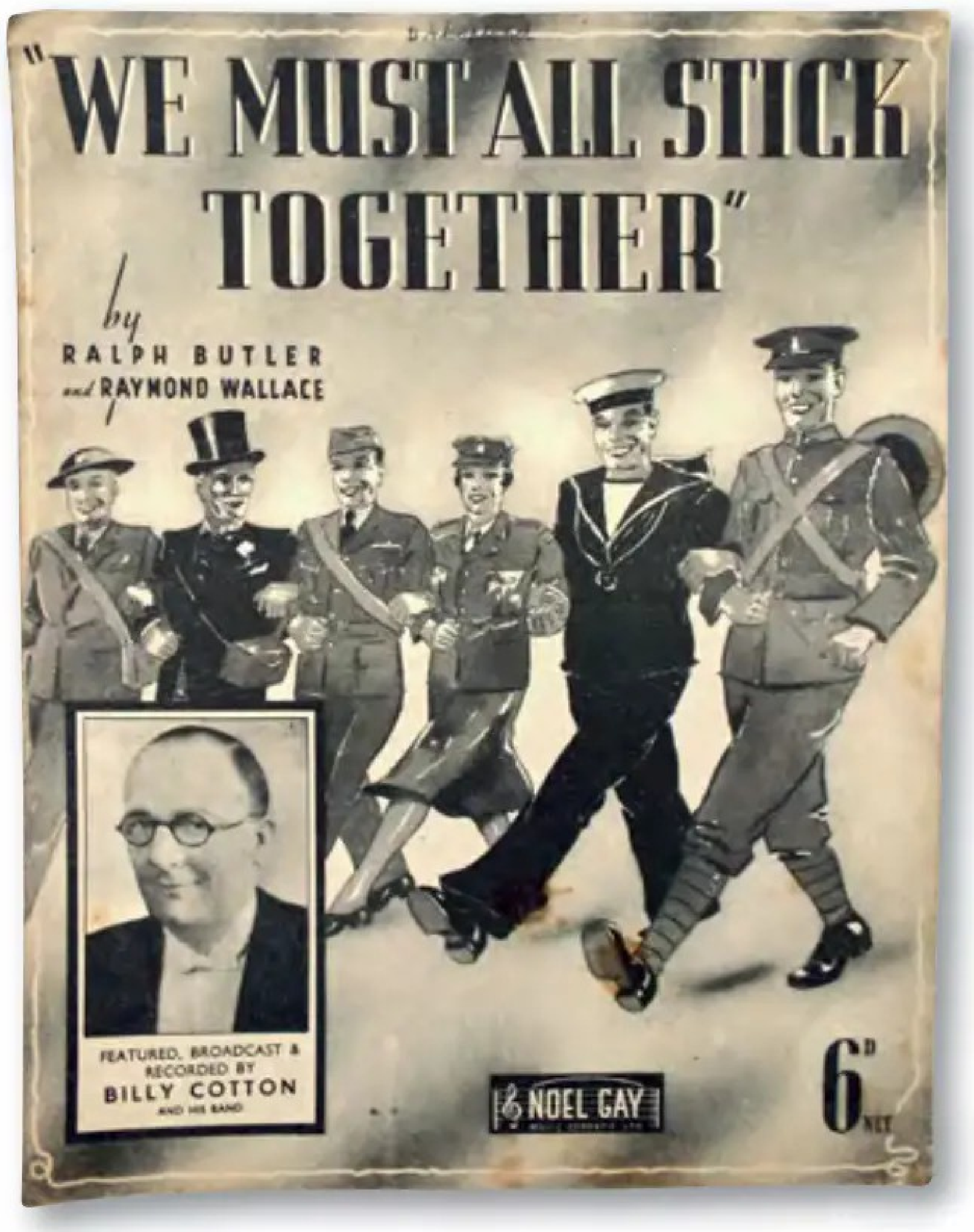
Morale-boosting bonhomie

Part of this was driven by the new phenomenon, Blitz Spirit. In his 2015 book *The Secret History of the Blitz*, historian Joshua Levine even pinpointed the official 'creation' of Blitz Spirit down to a 1941 Civil Defence Executive meeting that urged the Ministry of Information to mount a campaign to improve home morale. The committee stated that "under-developed team spirit" could be countered by "informing the people of Britain that their defiance provided the 'finest example of teamwork the world has ever seen".

That said, Blitz Spirit was not really a radical new phenomenon: indeed, there had been the earlier 'Dunkirk Spirit' just months before the bombing began. But while the nation may have been short of many commodities in 1940, it appears this morale-boosting form of national bonhomie developed and flowered during the Blitz.

THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND

The popularity of hit songs and their messages led to inspirational lyrics being adopted in badge form. This early-war badge is a rare survivor now, £35

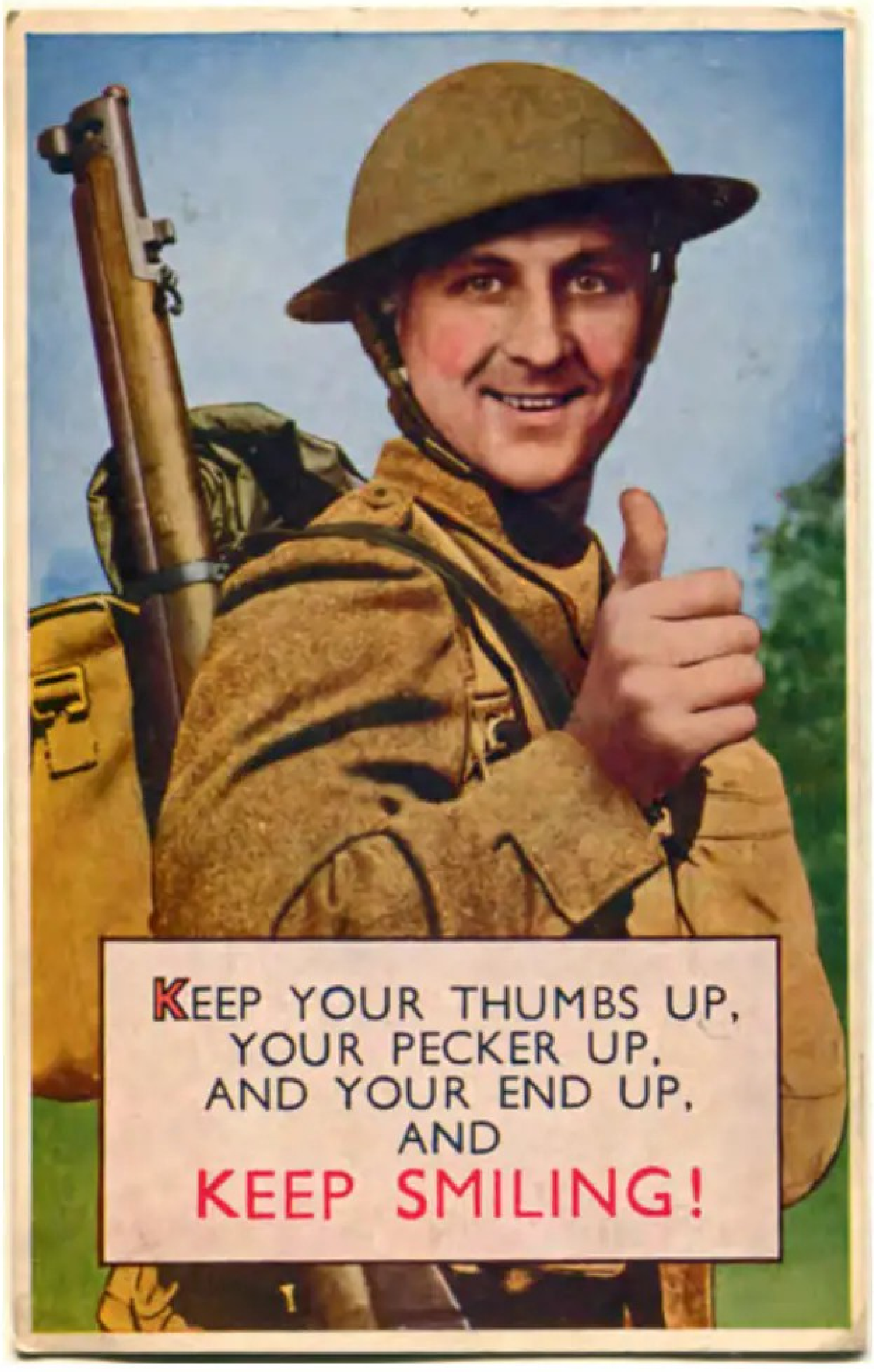

"WE MUST ALL STICK TOGETHER"
by RALPH BUTLER and RAYMOND WALLACE
FEATURED, BROADCAST & RECORDED BY BILLY COTTON AND HIS BAND
NOEL GAY
6D NET

Similar in vein, the 1939 song *We Must All Stick Together*, by Ralph Butler and Raymond Wallace, featured by Billy Cotton and his Band, tried to break down class and social barriers, highlighting that the Nazi threat was universal to all Britons. Rarer, £25

Britons from Prime Minister Winston Churchill and singer Vera Lynn to the air raid warden or postman exhibited this newfound defiance. Ordinary citizens helped bombed-out neighbours, welcomed strangers to their air raid shelter, opened their doors to evacuees, made an extra effort to get to work when transport was disrupted, worked that extra shift and shared the last of their sugar ration.

Blitz Spirit continued to flourish, even finding depiction in music and art. The famous 1942 series of War Office posters designed by artist Frank Newbould showed beautiful stirring scenes of the British countryside with the header "Your Britain, Fight For It Now".

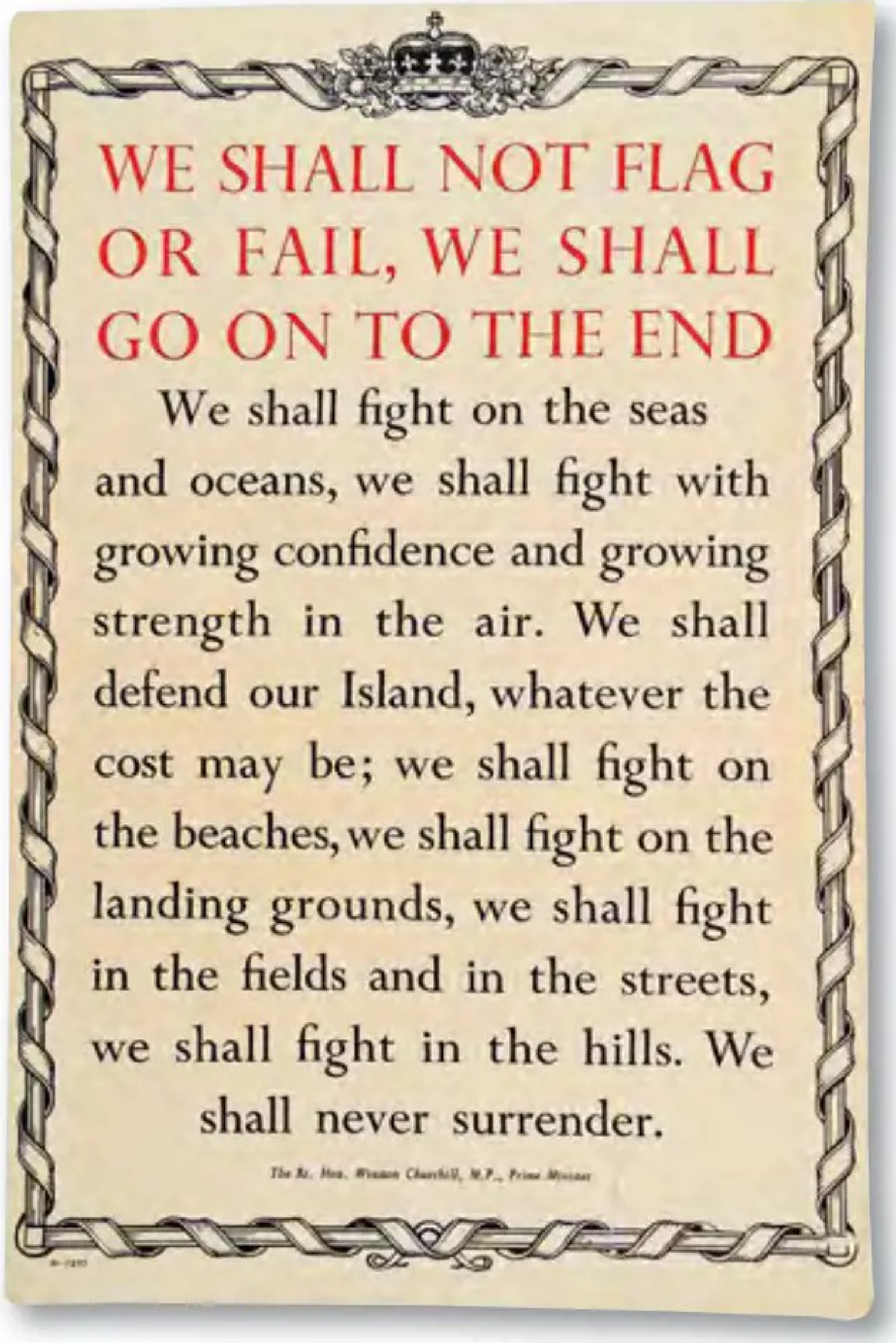
In the end, Blitz Spirit proved inexorable: its benevolence helped beat the bad faith and hate of Nazism. In 1973, novelist and wartime radio broadcaster J B Priestley reflected: "The British were absolutely at their best in the Second World War. They were never as good before it and, I'm sorry to say, they've never been quite as good after it."


KEEP YOUR THUMBS UP,
YOUR PECKER UP,
AND YOUR END UP,
AND
KEEP SMILING!

Just months before the emergence of Blitz Spirit, the nation had been grabbed by the doggedness of Dunkirk Spirit, as epitomised on this Bamforth postcard. Rare, £25

Championed and channelled

In the last 40 years, historians have either espoused or increasingly criticised the idea of Blitz Spirit. And in today's era of revisionism where, for some historians, many previous historical interpretations are viewed as erroneous, they question whether Blitz Spirit was all simply a government conspiracy or if it really existed at all.



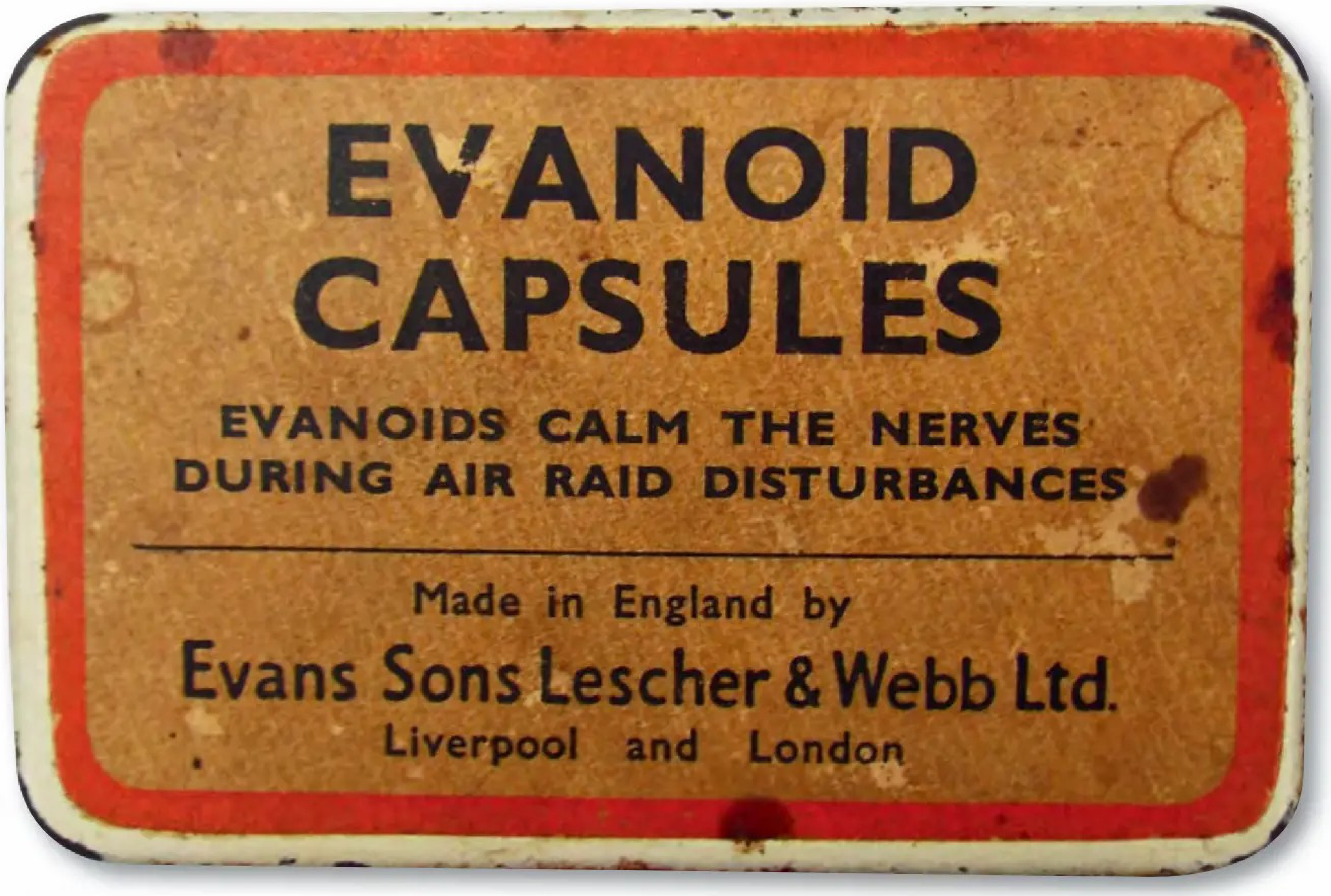
WE SHALL NOT FLAG OR FAIL, WE SHALL GO ON TO THE END

We shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.

The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P., Prime Minister

Churchill became the personification of defiance. His words, each a bullet at the enemy's heart, steeled the nation. Some of his greatest speeches were printed as rousing 15in x 10in posters. Very rare, £150

Of course, the concept was undoubtedly championed and channelled by government as part of its narrative – you'd hardly expect them to push the line, "it's all disastrous and we're going to lose the war". Indeed, official Ministry of Information propaganda films such as the GPO Film Unit's *London Can Take It!* and *Britain Can Take it!* plus campaigns such as It All Depends On Me, promoted personal


EVANOID CAPSULES
EVANOIDS CALM THE NERVES DURING AIR RAID DISTURBANCES
Made in England by
Evans Sons Lescher & Webb Ltd.
Liverpool and London

The great fear was that air raids would break the civilian population, causing mass hysteria. London drug firm Evans Sons Lescher & Webb Ltd produced Evanoid Capsules to "calm the nerves during air raid disturbances". Rare, £45

Simple gestures and tokens of defiance could boost spirits, as espoused by this cheering badge. Rare, £25

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF THINGS
W. HEATH ROBINSON AND CECIL HUNT

Master of the absurd, illustrator William Heath Robinson, took light aim not at the Germans, but British wartime measures and the nation's stoicism, in his book *How To Make The Best of Things* (Hutchinson & Co, 1941). Rare, £30

There'll always be an England
Song by ELVN DAVIES
CARROLL LEVIS' FILM DISCOVERIES
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Early wartime spirit was grander and more jingoistic. The 1939 song *There'll Always Be an England*, by Ross Parker and Hughie Charles, was reminiscent of the national anthem and proved an instant hit, with 200,000 song sheets sold in two months. It can be found for under £5

> *"[Many] thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear war today"*
>
> PRIME MINISTER HAROLD MACMILLAN

responsibility and working towards the greater good, not dissimilarly echoed 20 years later by President John F Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country" in his 1961 inaugural address.

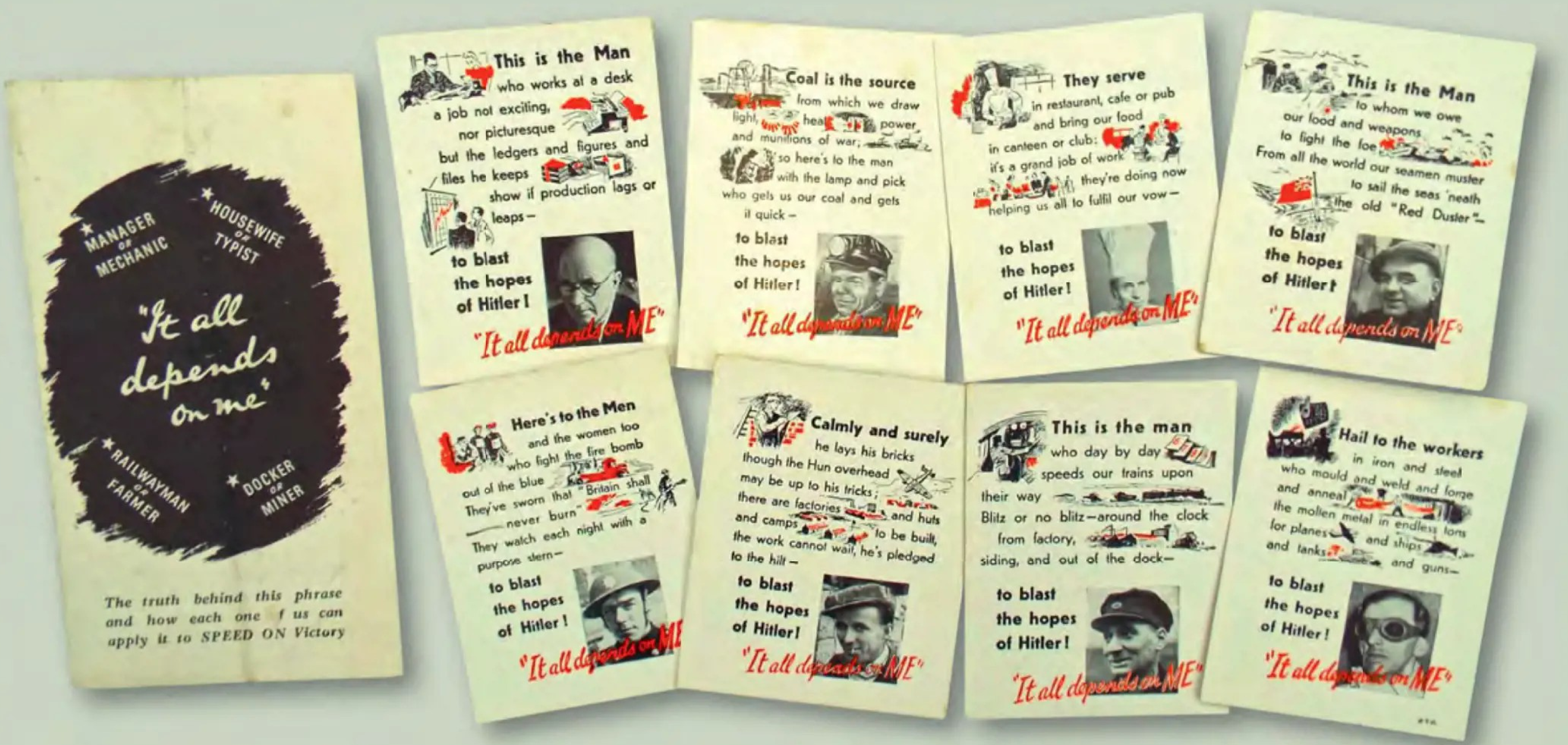
However, the defiance of bomb-blasted shopkeepers – using witty slogans such as "More open than usual" or a windowless Soho barber's "A close shave, sir? Never mind the blasted windows, walk right in" – was organic, not compulsorily daubed by propagandists, but voluntarily by locals.

Yet it is also true that not everyone pulled together and acted in the national good, from political extremists who sided with the Axis to criminals who exploited the situation. But, as most records show, they were and still are, the exceptional minority in society. To disproportionately focus on these examples is looking down the wrong end of the telescope of history.

The interpretation and assessment of history should not be binary – it was not all one way or the other. Indeed, when historian Angus Calder published his 1991 book *The Myth of the Blitz,* he drew incoming fire from critics' ire for his perceived challenging of the Blitz Spirit story. Those who read his book discovered Calder stressed that his use of the word 'myth' did not imply falsehood, but a one-sided version of the truth. Indeed, he commended the "myth" for promoting a "juster and fairer society".

Still relevant?

Thus, Blitz Spirit did exist, though as Joshua Levine concluded, to what extent is probably immeasurable today: "It is clear that Blitz Spirit was real enough. It



MANAGER OR MECHANIC
HOUSEWIFE OR TYPIST
"It all depends on me"
RAILWAYMAN OR FARMER
DOCKER OR MINER

The truth behind this phrase and how each one of us can apply it to SPEED ON Victory

This is the Man
who works at a desk
a job not exciting,
nor picturesque
but the ledgers and figures and
files he keeps
show if production lags or
leaps –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

Coal is the source
from which we draw
light, heat, power,
and munitions of war;
so here's to the man
with the lamp and pick
who gets us our coal and gets
it quick –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

They serve
in restaurant, cafe or pub
and bring our food
in canteen or club:
it's a grand job of work
they're doing now
helping us all to fulfil our vow –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

This is the Man
to whom we owe
our food and weapons
to fight the foe
From all the world our seamen muster
to sail the seas 'neath
the old "Red Duster" –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

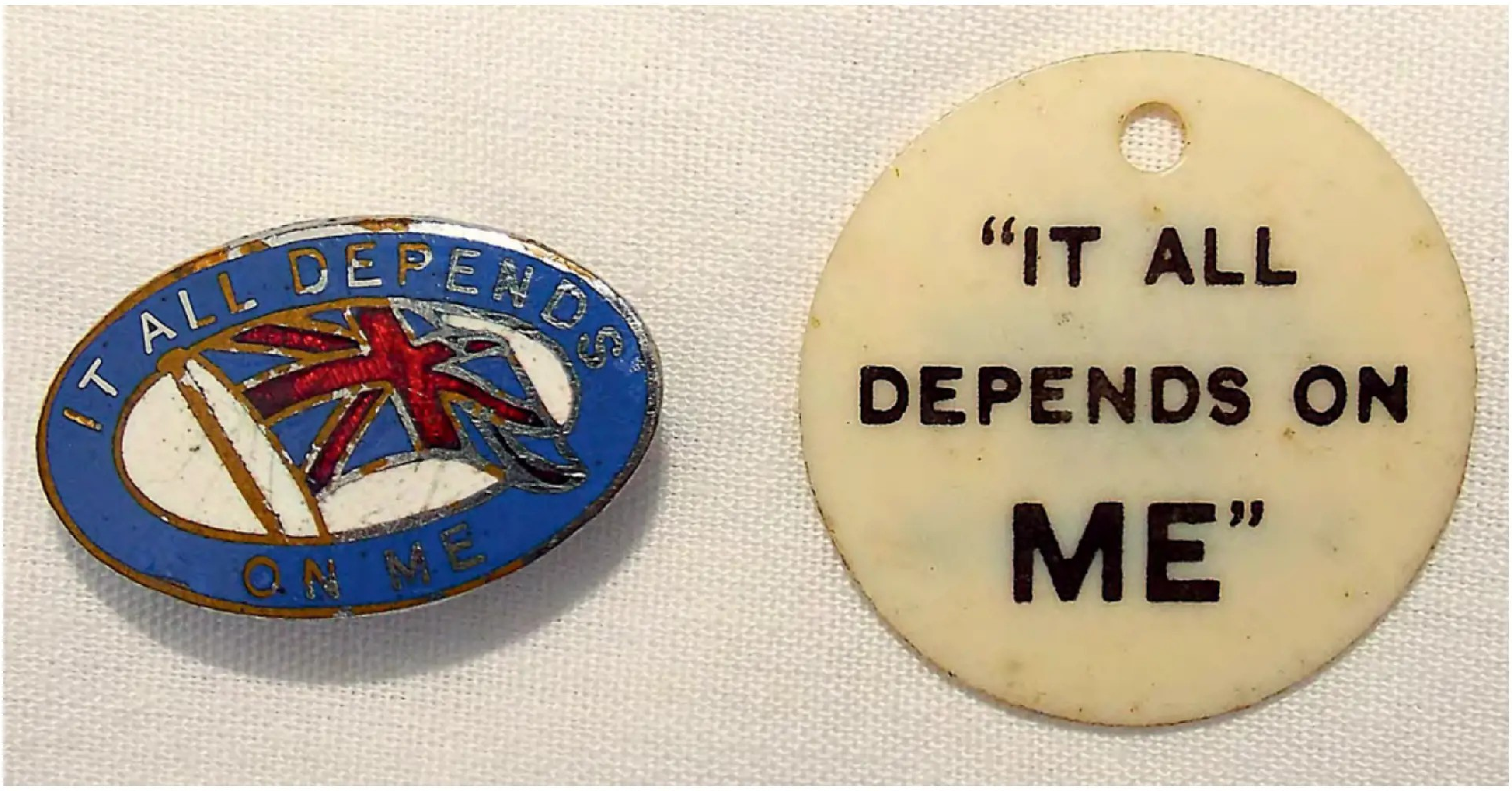
Here's to the Men
and the women too
who fight the fire bomb
out of the blue
They've sworn that "Britain shall
never burn" –
They watch each night with a
purpose stern –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

Calmly and surely
he lays his bricks
though the Hun overhead
may be up to his tricks;
there are factories and huts
and camps to be built,
the work cannot wait, he's pledged
to the hilt –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

This is the man
who day by day
speeds our trains upon
their way
Blitz or no blitz – around the clock
from factory,
siding, and out of the dock –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

Hail to the workers
in iron and steel
who mould and weld and forge
and anneal
the molten metal in endless tons
for planes and ships
and tanks and guns –
to blast
the hopes
of Hitler!
"It all depends on ME"

Little is known of the origins of the It All Depends On Me campaign, except it is believed to have been initiated by the Ministry of Information. The small leaflet suggested ways Britons could be better citizens, rare, £25. Tobacco manufacturers Ardath supported the campaign with 24 cigarette cards highlighting workers' contributions. Uncommon, the set costs £25



Other promotional merchandise was also sold, such as this enamel badge made by Thomas Fattorini Ltd and a plastic key ring disc with 'It All Depends On Me' on one side and 'For Victory And Freedom' on the other. The badge is rarer at £40, the key ring disc at £30

> *"Even iconic objects associated with Britain's wartime experience, such as the Spitfire or Lancaster, evoke wartime bravado"*

is not a story founded on lies. Blitz Spirit was genuine, but its subtlety and complexity were removed by journalists, politicians, civil servants and ordinary people."

Eighty years on, Blitz Spirit still has the power to stir emotions. Even iconic objects associated with Britain's wartime experience, such as the Spitfire or Lancaster, evoke wartime bravado; an AI-generated meme circulated on social media recently showed Spitfires flying over the white cliffs of Dover, with the words "The clocks go back this weekend – I'm setting mine back to 1940 when this country had some guts" or words to that effect.

Critics will, rightly, observe this is an unsophisticated, rose-tinted, romanticised take. Would anyone really want to swap their 2025 lives for the horrors and deprivations of 1940? And were people 'tougher' than today's generation? Times were certainly tough for many back then, when millions lived in poor conditions and on low wages – but then again, many still do today.

Today, when many people barely know their neighbours, modern society has become less community-minded and fractured, with nations riven by deliberately devisive politicians. It seems strange that it takes a world war to foster a benevolent community spirit.

Most of the wartime generation have now passed on and general knowledge and lessons of the war years are rapidly fading into history, too. There are now younger generations who never knew relatives who lived through this epoch, so 'the war' means little to them. Many might be hard-pressed to state the start and end dates of the conflict, but, thinking about it from a different angle, that's not necessarily a bad thing: people shouldn't have to live under the cloud of conflict – recent generations have grown up in an era free from all-consuming, global conflict and can therefore concentrate on the future.

However, it's no bad thing to pause a moment and reflect on how and why we have comparatively luxurious lives, free from the air raids, rationing and loss that blighted our forebears. Remembrance is and should be for all ages, not just those who knew veterans. The objects shown here reflect Britain's Blitz Spirit, both officially and unofficially. It's hard not to feel that today's society could and should learn lessons from World War Two – that is the enduring value of history. BW

KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON

One of the most defiant slogans did not reach mass consumption until 2000, when an old poster was discovered. About 20 years ago, I bought this Keep Calm And Carry On plastic bin, complete with erroneous Swedish crown, tickled by the crass commercialism of this historic rallying cry. Similar bins can still be found for £7.50

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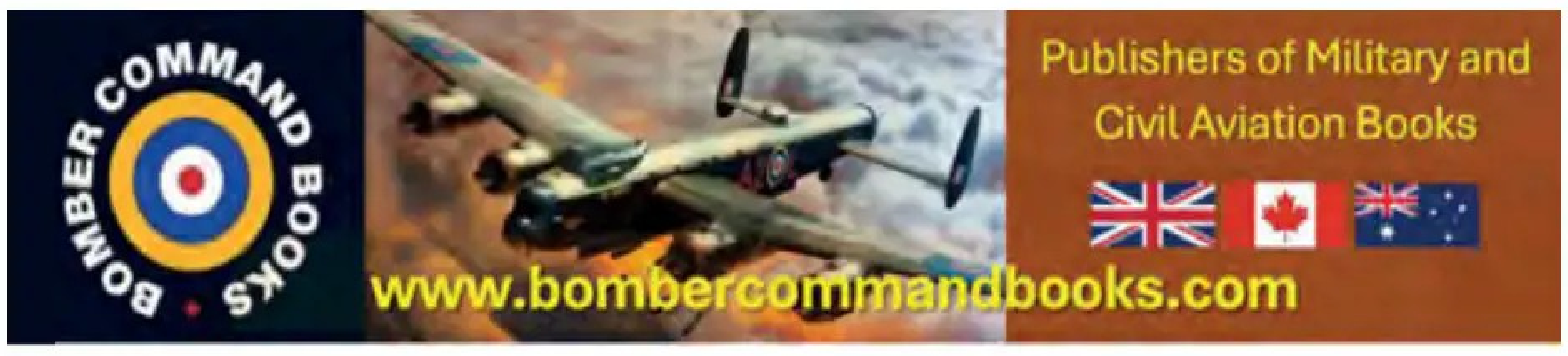
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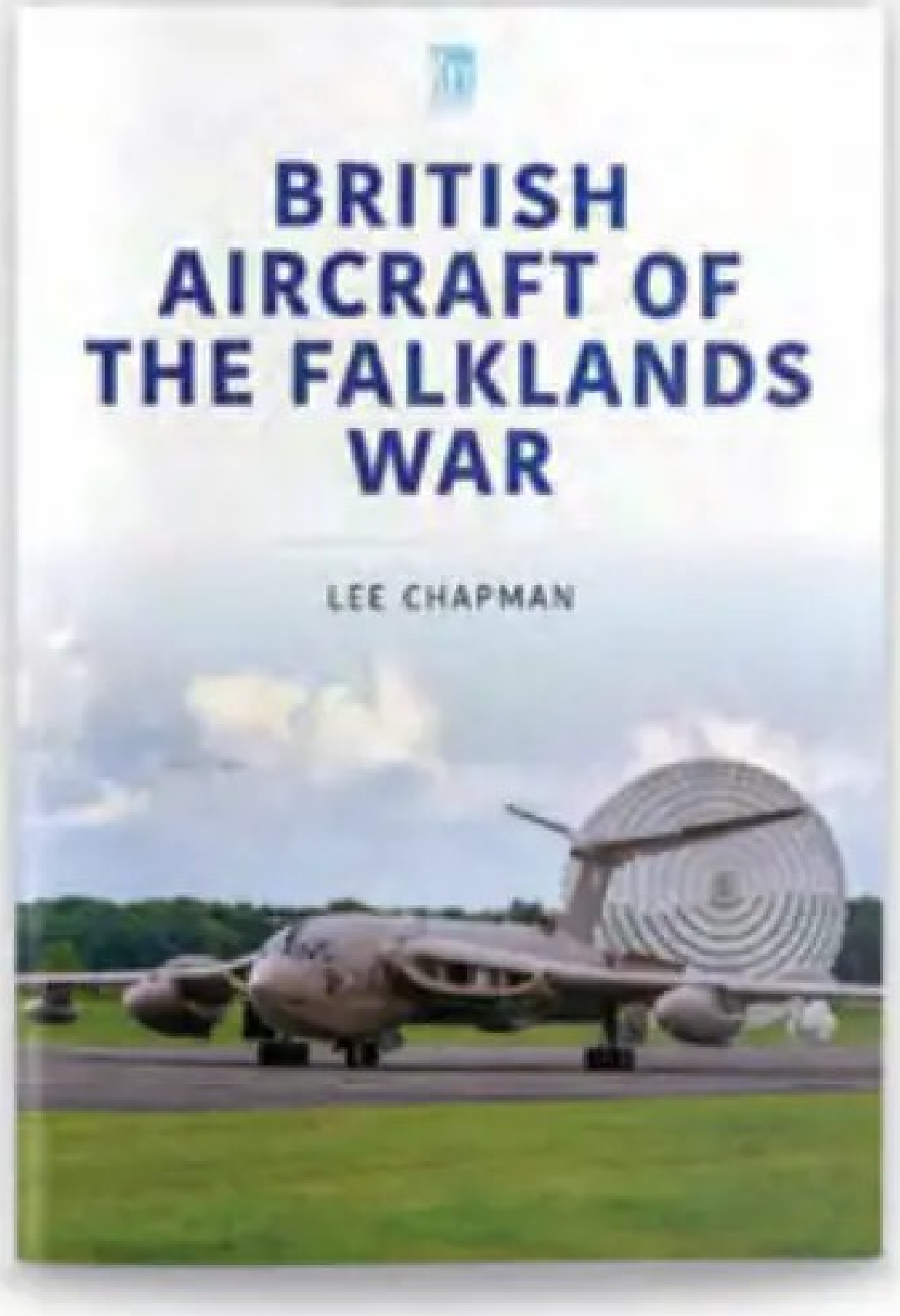
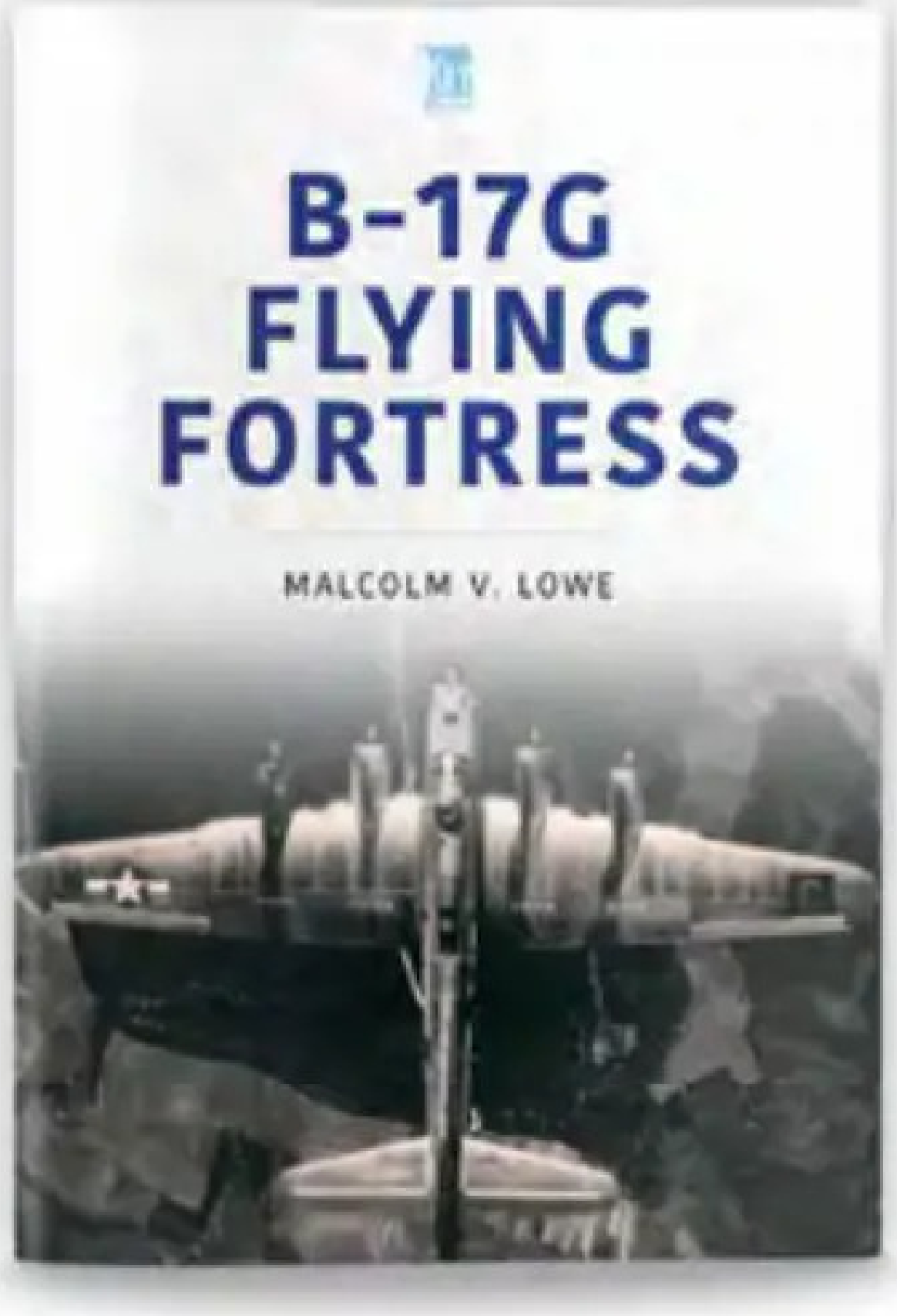

BRITISH AIRCRAFT OF THE FALKLANDS WAR
LEE CHAPMAN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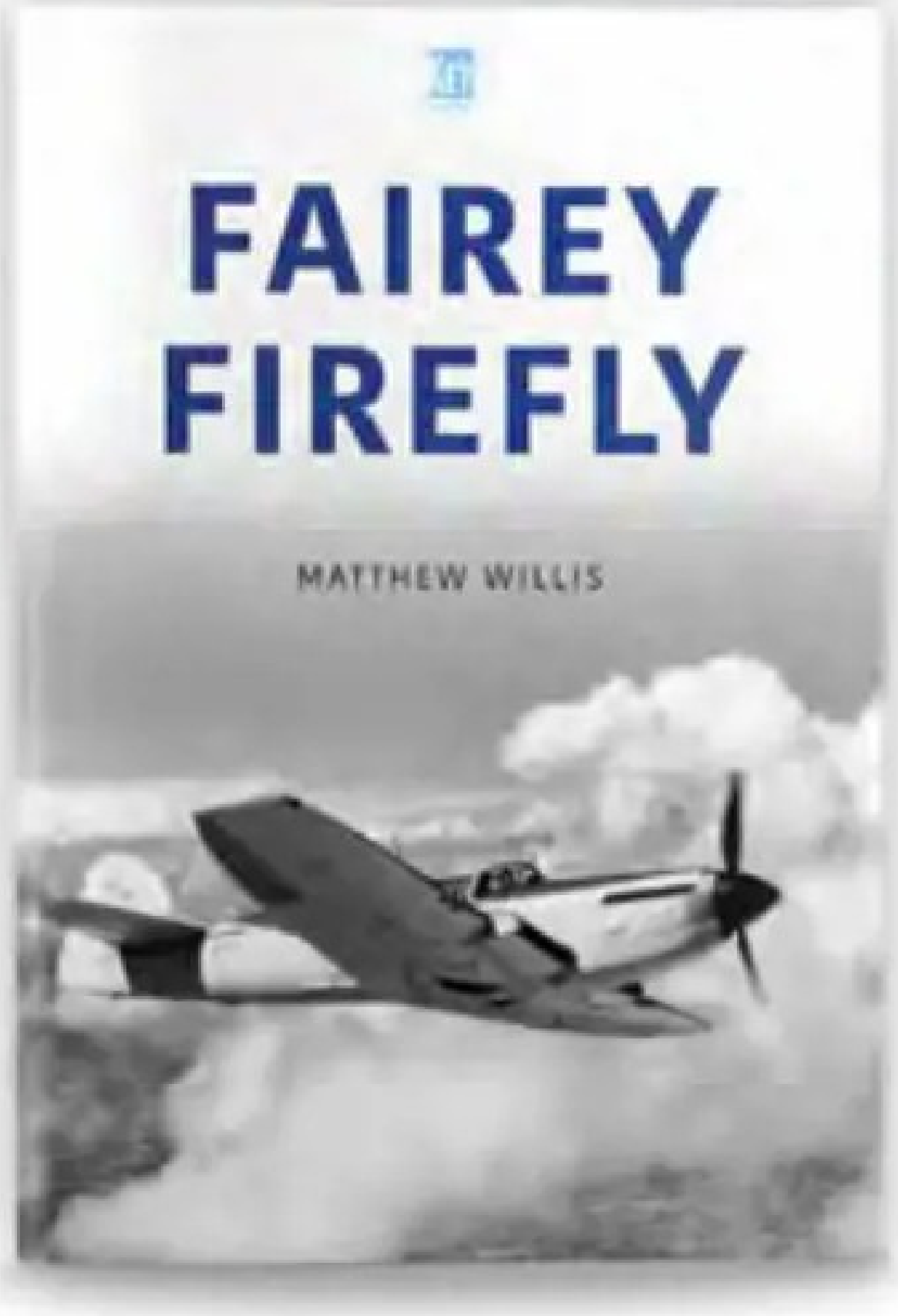
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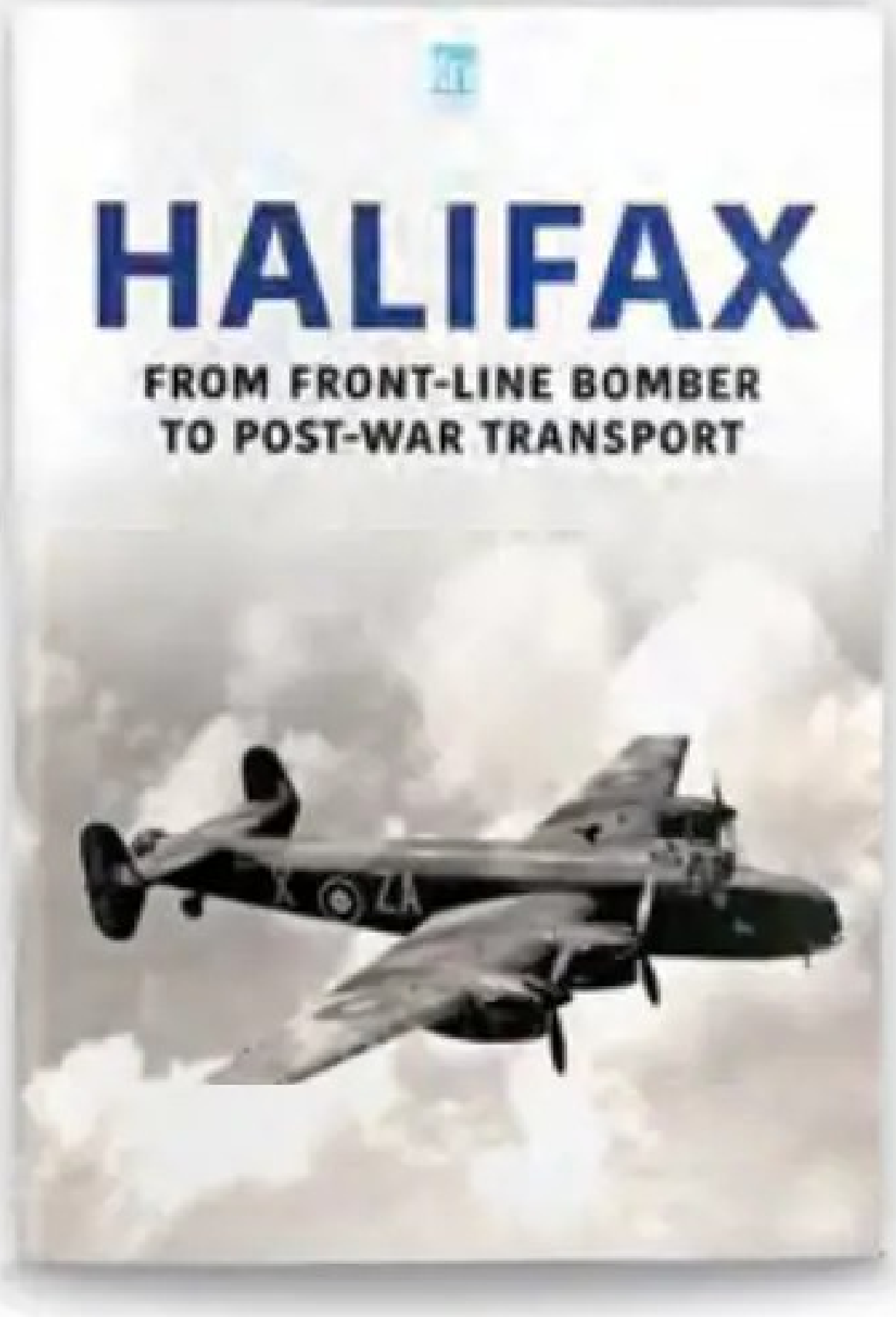
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Sergeant Henry Edward Kenny VC

HERO of the MONTH

By Lord Ashcroft

Henry Kenny VC
LORD ASHCROFT
MEDAL COLLECTION

Sergeant Henry Kenny was awarded the VC for exceptional bravery on the first day of the Battle of Loos, an occasion that proved challenging for several reasons for the British forces. Indeed, the day became infamous for both the blunders of senior officers and for the heavy casualties suffered by the inexperienced British troops.

Henry Edward Kenny was born in Woolwich, southeast London, on July 27, 1888. His parents, John and Susan Kenny, were originally from County Limerick, Ireland, and his father worked as a coachman. Henry, the second eldest of eight children, was educated at St John's Certified Industrial School, Walthamstow.

Kenny enlisted in The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) in October 1906, aged 18. The regiment, formed in 1881 as part of the Childers Reforms, recruited primarily from Preston, Chorley, Bolton and Wigan but also accepted men from outside Lancashire and the north of England. Kenny was transferred to the Army Reserves in 1911 and immediately before the outbreak of World War One he was employed by Abdulla & Company Ltd, cigarette manufacturers.

After the outbreak of war, Kenny was soon mobilised and he travelled as part of the 1st Battalion, The Loyal Regiment, to France with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in August 1914. The BEF at this point consisted of about 100,000 men that were sent to the Western Front early in the conflict to help stop the German advance. Queen Victoria's first grandson, Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany, was dismissive of the BEF, allegedly issuing an order on August 19, 1914, to "exterminate... the treacherous English and walk all over General [John] French's contemptible little army".

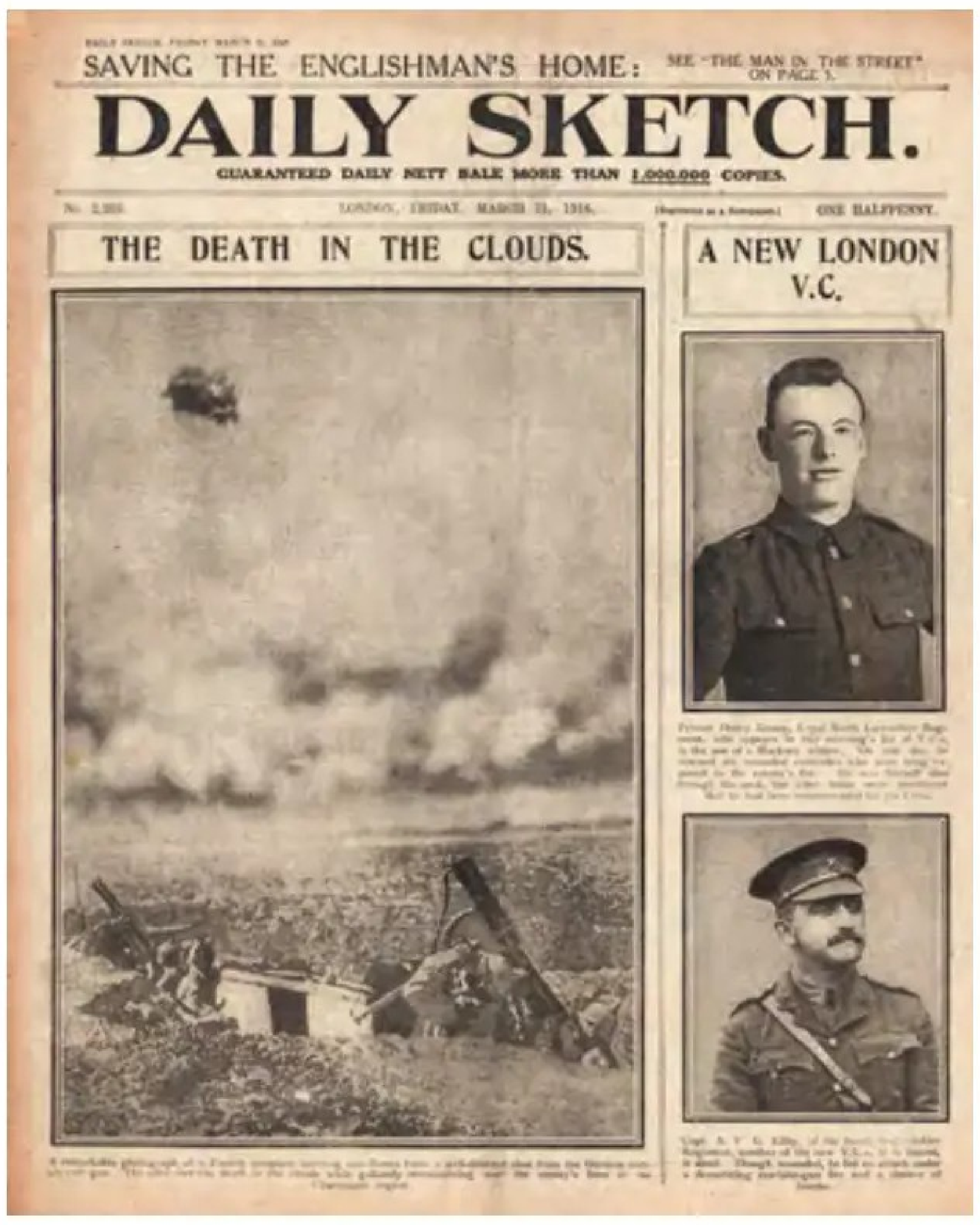
> *"Kenny went forward – ahead of his own company and despite heavy enemy fire – to rescue a wounded comrade... He did this no less than six times that day"*

It was not long before Kenny and his comrades were involved in the thick of the fighting: he was present at Mons, the retreat from Mons and the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne. Then in October 1914, he was involved in the defence of Ypres, a town in West Flanders, Belgium, during the First Battle of Ypres.

Desperate rescues

In December 1914, Kenny was present at Festubert, France, before enjoying a break from fighting over Christmas. However, he was soon back in the line, taking part in the fighting at La Bassée, Neuve Chapelle and, finally, Loos.

The first day of the Battle of Loos took place on September 25, 1915, but it was preceded by a four-day artillery bombardment. The primary role for the British forces was to launch an offensive north of Lens to support the French in their advance south of the city. The British used chlorine gas for the first time in the war but in the centre of the line, east of Vermelles, adverse wind conditions carried the gas back over British positions. Other problems faced by the advancing forces were that the artillery bombardment had not done sufficient damage to the German's barbed wire defences and so progress was slow, resulting in heavy casualties.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LONDON, FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 1916. ONE HALFPENNY.

THE DEATH IN THE CLOUDS.

A NEW LONDON V.C.

Kenny's VC made the front page of the Daily Sketch newspaper
JOHN FROST NEWSPAPERS/ALAMY

It was during this intense fighting that Private Kenny, then 27, went forward – ahead of his own company and despite heavy enemy fire – to rescue a wounded comrade. By the end of that day, he had done this no less than six times, each time carrying back a wounded man. However, on his last rescue mission, Kenny was shot and wounded in the neck. His injuries were serious enough for him to require hospital treatment, first at the Duchess of Westminster's Hospital in Le Touquet, France, and, later, at Lady Astor's Hospital in Taplow, Buckinghamshire.

By Christmas 1915, Kenny had recovered sufficiently to rejoin his battalion. His VC was announced on March 30, 1916, when his citation stated: "For most conspicuous bravery. Private Kenny went out on six different occasions on one day under a very heavy shell, rifle and machine

British infantry advancing into a gas cloud during the Battle of Loos
GL ARCHIVE/ALAMY

gun fire, and each time succeeded in carrying to a place of safety a wounded man who had been lying in the open. He was himself wounded in the neck while handing the last man over his parapet." Kenny received his VC from King George V at an investiture at Buckingham Palace on May 20.

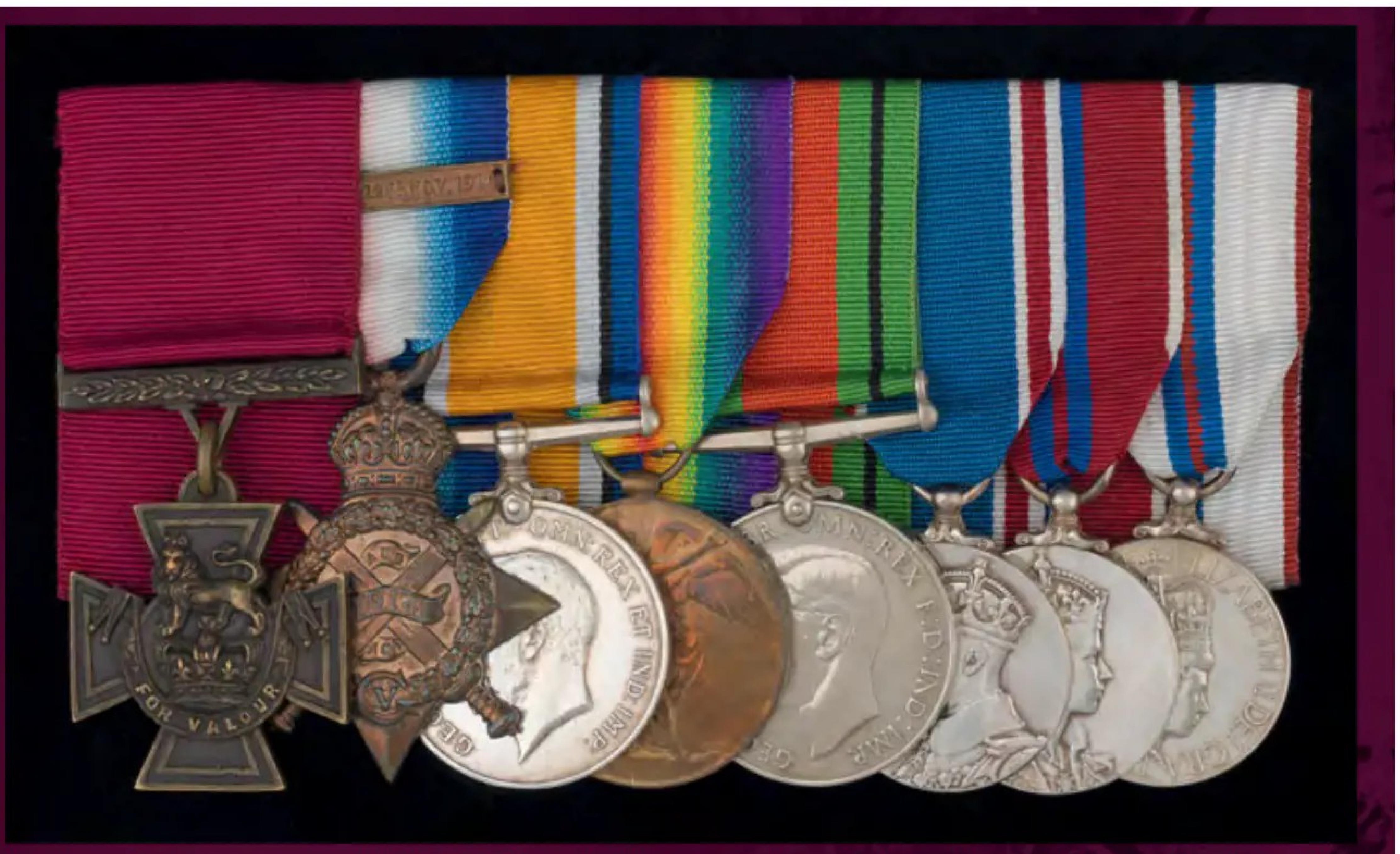
Raider to reveller

Kenny continued to serve with distinction for the remainder of World Wae One, including taking part in the Zeebrugge Raid of April 1918. This was an attempt by the British to block the key Belgian port: the aim to sink obsolete ships in the canal entrance to prevent German vessels, including U-boats, from leaving.

On April 23, 1918, there were concurrent attacks on both Zeebrugge and Ostend with blockships scuttled. However, they were sunk in the wrong place and after a few days the Germans had opened the canal to submarines and light shipping and so the audacious attack was not a success. Of the 1,700 men involved in the operation, more than 200 were killed and more than 300 had been wounded.

Kenny was discharged at the rank of sergeant in March 1919, four months after the end of the war. Back in civilian life, he worked in London for Spencer Press Ltd, a subsidiary of Abdulla Ltd, his pre-war employers.

As a proud recipient of Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious gallantry award, Kenny was keen to play a full role in various social events organised for those who had been awarded the decoration before and during the conflict. In June 1920, he attended a garden party hosted by the King at Buckingham Palace. Later that year, he attended the official opening of the Cenotaph. The monument, built from Portland stone, was unveiled by George V at 11am on November 11, 1920. He was also a member of the VC Guard at the interment of the Unknown Warrior, in Westminster Abbey, on the same date.



Kenny's medal group, comprising his VC, 1914 Star (with 5th Aug – 22nd Nov 1914 clasp), War Medal, Inter-Allied Victory Medal, 1939-45 Defence Medal, George VI Coronation Medal, Elizabeth II Coronation Medal, and Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal LORD ASHCROFT MEDAL COLLECTION

> *"After the outbreak of World War Two, Kenny was again keen to support his country in its hour of need [and] served in the Home Guard"*

On November 9, 1929, Kenny attended the British Legion dinner for VC recipients staged at the Royal Gallery in the House of Lords, when he was reunited with other soldiers who had taken part in the Zeebrugge raid 11 years earlier.

After the outbreak of the World War Two in September 1939, Kenny was again keen to support his country in its hour of need. He served in the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), the forerunner to the Home Guard. The men serving in its ranks were intended to be the "last line of defence" against a German invasion.

King George V, the Princes and other dignitaries arriving at Westminster Abbey for the burial of the Unknown Warrior, passing the VC Guard PA/ALAMY

Kenny met George VI when the King came to inspect the LDV men at their headquarters in Woodford, Essex. The King recalled having met Kenny at an event in 1920 when he was still the Duke of York.

After World War Two, Kenny attended the Victory Parade and a celebration dinner on June 8, 1946. A decade later, he was present at the VC Centenary Review on June 26, 1956, which was also attended by Queen Elizabeth II. Kenny also attended the first two dinners for VC and GC recipients held in July 1958 and July 1960.

Kenny, who had a daughter, died at St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, Surrey, on May 6, 1979, aged 90. He was cremated, under the name of "Harry Kenny", nine days later at Woking Crematorium, Surrey, and his ashes were interred at St Mark's Church, Whiteley, near Hersham, Surrey. There is a display commemorating his VC action at Whiteley village club.

Valorous fiasco

I became the proud custodian of the Kenny medal group after buying it at an auction in London in 1992. In fact, in my medal collection there are two other VCs that resulted from bravery on the very same day as Kenny's action: September 25, 1915.

The Royal Gallery at the House of Lords during the November 1929 dinner in honour of VC recipients from across the Empire
KEYSTONE/GETTY

The first decoration was awarded posthumously to Private George Peachment, aged just 18, of the 2nd Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps, killed as he tended his Company Commander, Captain Dubs, in no-man's land during the Battle of Loos. The moving citation to Peachment's VC stated: "The enemy's fire was intense, but, though there was a shell hole quite close, in which a few men had taken cover, Private Peachment never thought of saving himself. He knelt in the open by his officer and tried to help him, but while doing this he was first wounded by a bomb and a minute later mortally wounded by a rifle bullet. He was one of the youngest men in his battalion and gave this splendid example of courage and self-sacrifice."

The second decoration, also a posthumous award, was to Captain Arthur Kilby, of the 2nd Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment. He was killed leading his men from the front against a well-defended position. His citation stated: "The company charged along the narrow towpath [by a canal], headed by Captain Kilby, who, though wounded at the outset, continued to lead his men right up to the enemy wire under a devastating machine gun fire and a shower of bombs. Here he was shot down, but, although his foot had been blown off, he continued to cheer on his men and to use a rifle. Captain Kilby has been missing since the date of the performance of this great act of valour, and his death has now to be presumed."

The events on the opening day of the Battle of Loos had given the British forces some hard lessons in trench warfare. The first use of chlorine gas by the Allies came despite warnings from engineers that the weather conditions were not suitable for such warfare.

As Second Lieutenant George Grossmith, of the 3rd Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment, reported to his fiancée in a letter penned two days later: "The gas hung in a thick pall over everything, and it was impossible to see more than ten yards. In vain I looked for my landmarks in the German line, to guide me to the right spot, but I could not see through the gas."

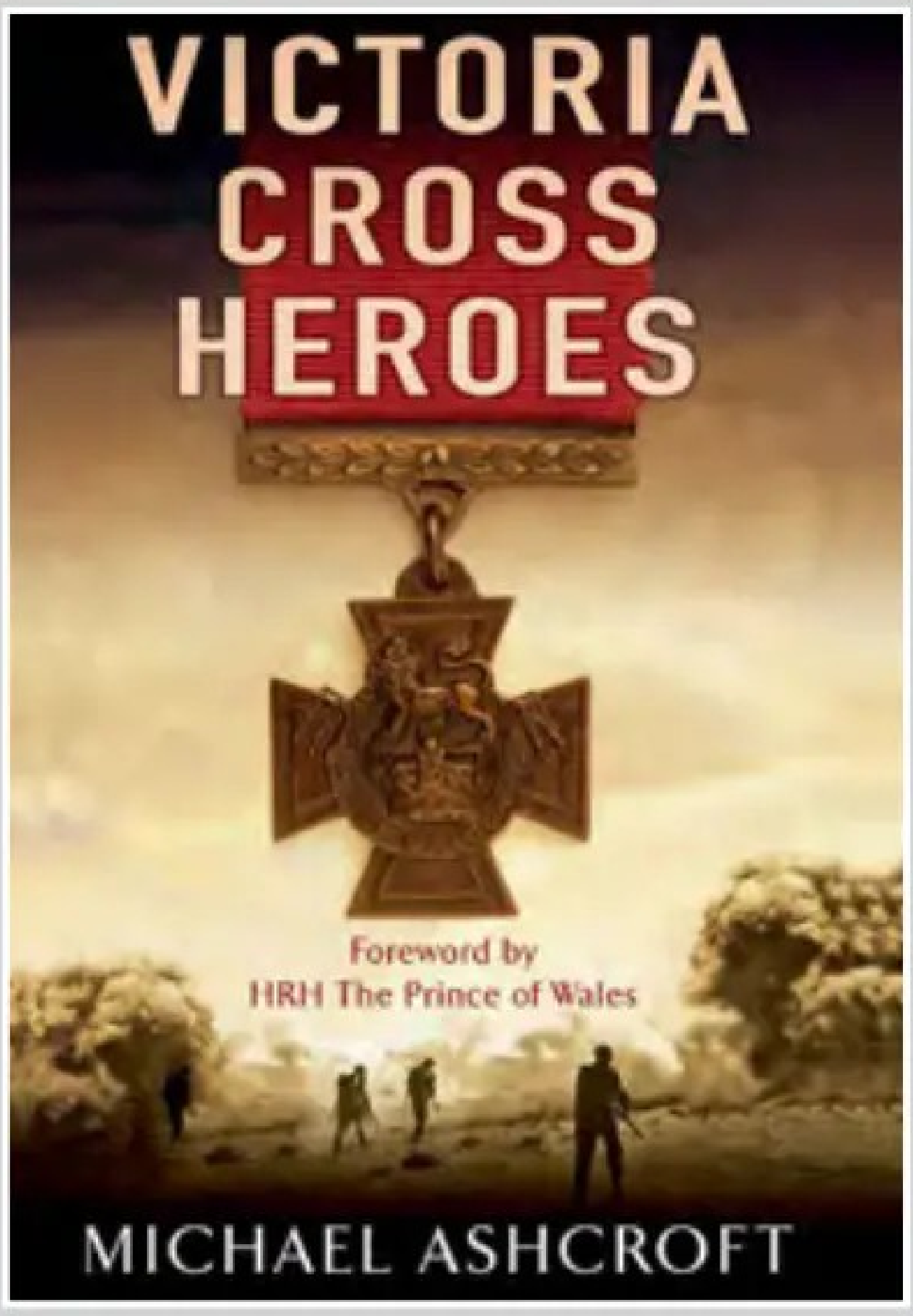
The fierceness of the fighting during the opening day was such that only 2,000 of the 8,500 soldiers killed on September 25, have a known grave. The battle, part of the "big push" of 1915, eventually lasted until October 8, 1915, by which point the British had suffered some 60,000 casualties – roughly twice the total losses of the enemy.

The failures at Loos contributed to Field Marshal Sir John French being replaced as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF by Douglas Haig, who was later also given the rank of field marshal.

The leadership's failings that became all-too apparent at Loos should never diminish the outstanding bravery displayed by men such as Henry Kenny VC. BW

VICTORIA CROSS HEROES

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His book, *Victoria Cross Heroes*, was first published in 2006. For more information, see: victoriacrossheroes.com. Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collection is on public display at the Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, visit iwm.org.uk/heroes. Details about his VC collection may be found at lordashcroftmedals.com. For more information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit lordashcroft.com. Follow him on X and Facebook: @LordAshcroft



ROUGH RIDERS
PETER DOYLE
RELUCTANT PARTNER

Military History with Pete and Gary

No.35

After the appalling winter and terrible dangers soldiers faced in 1914-15, it was not surprising that soldiers were desperate to get home on leave. As the weeks turned into months they began to obsess as to their chances of still being alive when that magic day came, and plan what they would do when they finally got home.

For Bombardier John Palmer, a signaller with the 118th Battery, 26th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, it could not come too soon. Then, at last, on February 4, 1915, he was told that he had been selected to go on leave: "I imparted the great news to my pals and after many envious looks, and handshakes all round, we began to come back to earth. Suddenly someone had a great brainwave. They all decided to write letters to their relatives and girlfriends. I could take them and post them in England. This was strictly against regulations, but they all gave their word that the contents would be purely personal, especially to their wives and girlfriends. The thought of being able to get one home without prying eyes first perusing them meant so much to all concerned."

Like many other soldiers before and since, Palmer found himself 'sweating on leave', especially as that night he was sent out to repair the vital telephone lines that linked the battery to the infantry and forward observation posts in the front line of the trenches. This was a difficult and dangerous business.

"It was no joke. It was pitch dark and I was on my own. I found myself stumbling into shell holes and being lacerated by barbed wire. I began to wonder if I should get my leave home after all, especially when 'Fritz' sent some shells over and a machine gun opened up nearby. I flopped down, naturally, just where the mud was most in evidence. All sorts of thoughts now began to go through my mind. Suppose I should stop a bullet now with my leave due tomorrow? I must confess I began to get that feeling which frankly amounted to fright; all I could think of was my leave – and the chance of losing it."

At last, the red-letter day of days arrived for Palmer: "Home, after about six months of mud, blood and enlightenment. Five whole days right away from the firing line, not just the so-called rest we had been used to when we were still liable to become casualties from enemy gunfire.

"I must have frightened the life out of my mother when I walked in. I was still alive with lice. I made my way down to the Conservative Club where I had a wonderful bath, the first since I left Aldershot. I rolled my dirty underwear up and took it home to dispose of. Later, I showed myself down the town and I must have got rid of most of the mud by that time! It was over all too soon and the five days had dwindled to three days when the travelling had been included."

Leave was a rare event for the ordinary soldier. Originally there was no real leave as it was expected that the war would be concluded speedily. Once the chances of quick victory disappeared, soldiers were granted short periods of leave, averaging something like ten days per 12-18 months deployed. Dominion men typically had to spend leave in France or Britain as they were so far from home. Indeed, Australian proposals for 'furlough' for its men who had been deployed since 1914 were rejected until 1918, when 7,000 ANZACs became eligible for two months' leave, which, with travel time, was expected to remove them from the front for at least four months.

Leave was vital for morale. The men looked forward to it so much, but it soon evaporated as time rushed on. All too soon John Palmer was back at the front.

Peter Hart and Gary Bain's long running 'Pete and Gary's Military History' weekly podcast is available via podcast services. Follow Pete and Gary on X, formerly known as Twitter: @HartMilitary

Next Month

March 2025, issue 215

Inside Your Magazine

On sale February 27

Many of you will know that despite Poland being overrun in the first weeks of World War Two, it continued the fight, with many Poles flocking to Britain. Famously, the Polish pilots of 303 Squadron claimed to be the top scorers during the Battle of Britain, while the 1st (Polish) Independent Parachute Brigade developed a reputation for tenacity at Arnhem. However, elements of the Polish Navy also reached Britain, bringing their ships with them. We tell the story of those daring captains and their crews as they sailed under the command of the British Admiralty.

It may look futuristic, but Britain's L85 rifle entered service 40 years ago this year. With its retirement looming, we take a look at its likely successors and ask why its replacement could well be based on a much older firearm.

We detail the RAF's first independent operation, which began 100 years ago next month. We've also spoken to the family of a man who joined the Home Guard and later served in the 79th Armoured Division, to share his story. Finally, we profile development of the largest bomb ever deployed by the RAF: the Grand Slam.

Plus

News, Lord Ashcroft's Hero of the Month, reviews and more

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1874
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